

Sales Force Effectiveness at Allergan

Objective

Allergan is a global pharmaceutical company that develops and commercialises products for specialty markets. The company also has global marketing and sales capabilities in over 100 countries - aiming to deliver value, satisfy unmet medical needs and improve lives. Steps worked in partnership with Sunny Goyal, UK & Europe Training Manager at Allergan, to develop the skills of one of their sales teams through a day-long experiential event. Allergan wanted to create a learning experience that took into account the reps' existing sales skills – and gave them an opportunity to develop their individual techniques and their capability as a team. Steps were tasked with creating a programme to provide a deeper understanding of different personality types and explore strategies for adapting behaviour. This programme was part of a wider business objective, of developing a greater awareness and skill level among the sales force – feeding into ongoing coaching and development out in the field.

Approach

The initiative was developed into a day long simulation, set outside the pharmaceutical environment. The session was designed to task delegates to distinguish, appreciate and understand the customer thoroughly - in order to recognise and take advantage of selling opportunities. Designed to be fun, fast paced and challenging, the programme stretched the participants and established a focus on people rather than product.

Group exercises explored the theory and practice behind effective selling conversations and allowed peers to share valuable learning. Coaching the characters and giving feedback to others in the team was an integral part of the day, giving a valuable opportunity for participants to improve their individual skills and explore their own behaviours as the day progressed. The reps walked away energised, with an attitudinal change and a common language.

We used various techniques in the day-long simulation, beginning the day with a non-interactive piece of drama, introducing the five characters that the delegates were to work with all day. From this point the delegates explored personality types. In smaller groups they were introduced to each character and tasked with making a good impression, begin building a relationship and at the same time identify the personality type. Between each session with the characters, the delegates had the opportunity to reassess their thoughts with their colleagues with support from a facilitator, who encouraged deeper thinking with key questions and challenges. The day closed with a group plenary that allowed ideas and thoughts to be shared, challenged and owned by each individual.

Outcomes

Feedback was resoundingly positive, from the client management team and from delegates on the day. Sunny Goyal commented: 'Steps managed an outstanding project to improve the interactions of our teams with customers, working on an emotional level. They clearly understood our needs and put a programme together that set expectations, delivered, and has been followed up with clear development. I have no hesitation in recommending Steps and would certainly work with the team again.'