

Performance Methods, Inc. + Verizon

The Situation

Verizon Communications is one of the country's largest telecommunications organizations, delivering advanced broadband and wireless solutions to consumers, businesses and government entities. The organization has a nationwide customer base of nearly 57 million users.

In 2006, Verizon launched "Verizon Enhanced Communities," (VEC), a new business unit which would provide voice, data and video services to multi-dwelling properties. The business unit, formerly known as "Verizon Avenue," needed its sales department to aggressively pursue service and marketing agreements with developers of single-home complexes; new apartment, condo and co-op high-rises; military installations; and student housing. While a part of the larger Verizon corporation, the VEC culture was more akin to a start-up than a large enterprise.

The Challenge

The new division engaged individuals from existing Verizon business units to provide a dedicated team for the operation of VEC. To make the situation work, VEC needed to establish a common process and language from which to structure a defined sales process and an effective executive reporting system for business operations.

VEC required an external sales training provider to help the members of the team make a seamless transition into its newly formed business unit, thereby empowering the entire sales team without detracting from their current sales efforts. VEC was initially challenged with having no standard sales process in place, as well as an inability to provide a forward view of sales performance for the new business unit. Verizon needed a simple, intuitive process that could easily be learned and adopted across the new division.

The Process

VEC needed not only a training program, it also required both a long-term solution that would affect the organization's culture and a support system, as employees adjusted to the new processes. VEC chose Performance Methods Inc. (PMI), as the best fit for their task. Supporting this decision was PMI's exceptional score in the 2006 Sales Training Vendor Guide, an annual assessment of sales trainers conducted by ES Research Group (ESR), the nation's leading independent source on sales performance. According to the Guide, PMI ranked exceptionally well in most categories of ESR's Sales Training Vendor Guide. During interviews with ESR's analysts, PMI had demonstrated its strategic and proven ability to build customized solutions— a clear indication that it would fit Verizon's specific operational requirements, management expectations and sales goals.

PMI pursued the engagement with a structured approach, involving:

1. An assessment of best practices - PMI underwent a "deep dive" discovery process of VEC to determine specific requirements, needs, strengths and challenges. This involved extensive discussions with executives and top performing team members.
2. A predictable, repeatable process was developed - Based on input from executives, key team members and top sales performers, PMI created a sales process based on best practices from the multiple constituents.

Perfect Fit

"It's no surprise to see the dramatic results achieved by Verizon. ESR's research revealed that PMI had strategic insight, an exceptional framework and a customized approach – a perfect fit for Verizon's requirements."

— Dave Stein, CEO, ES Research Group, Inc.

3. A plan was set into action - A detailed action plan for carrying out the new processes was deployed across the business unit with ongoing training and field coaching.

The Result

PMI implemented a sales operations methodology which would provide necessary sales forecasting, a defined process for the sales people and visibility into that process by managers and company executives.

- **Forecasting Tool:** PMI helped Verizon Enhanced Communities develop an executive dashboard that offered division-wide transparency into the current issues as well as providing a forecast via a weekly reporting process summarizing results and info.
- **Standardized Process:** PMI created a simple, one-page sales tool that outlined the success factors for a sales rep to execute throughout the entire sales process. VEC employees gained valuable structure and consistency during the sales process, resulting in more efficient reporting of results.
- **Management Training:** PMI trained VEC sales managers to become internal "best practices experts" and readied them for their coaching role. The managers' goal was to reinforce the reps new behaviors and processes. The new culture and processes were adopted across Verizon's executive team to ensure understanding of the process and to facilitate management support to the reps as needed.

The success of the program resulted in growing the number of units with premise access agreements by 591% -- from 57,000 to 337,000 units under contract in the first year of the program with the same staff in place. In addition, the executive reporting cycle time was reduced from 7 days to 1 day, while providing the leadership team with a necessary forward-looking view of the business.

The Key Success Factors

Ultimately, success was determined by Verizon management's willingness to adopt change and strong executive sponsorship. Other key factors included:

1. Involvement of employees throughout the assessment and process development phases to gain ownership and buy-in and to assure proper deployment of solutions
2. Deep and comprehensive analysis of the organization to create a customized solution based on proven best practices
3. Regular interaction with and feedback from sales representatives to management.
4. Selection of and engagement with a proven, highly competent sales performance improvement provider.

Best Practices

"The success of Verizon Enhanced Communities in rapidly driving access and penetration of our triple-play services (voice, internet and video) to strategic property developers and multi-dwelling unit properties is a cornerstone of our Fiber to the Premises (FTTP) strategy. Focusing on best practices allowed us to dramatically increase productivity while reducing cycle time."

-- Eric Cevis, VP,
Verizon Enhanced
Communities.