

Background

This intervention was done by NIS Sparta for a well known brand in the in the Personal Grooming and Toiletries segment since 1964. This company over the past 40 years of their operations created some of the finest products in the personal grooming segment. Their portfolio includes the following products:

1. toiletries
2. premium home and personal care products
3. hair dyes

Currently, the company is market leader in Eau de Cologne and leading players in deodorant and Room Freshener segment.

Overview of business challenges

NIS Sparta's business team and training effectiveness consultants had a series of discussions with representatives of the company in which they shared their concerns and expectations. They explained that the market for products such as dyes, home care and personal care was tough. There were many players, each with a strong presence boosted by new research and organised retail penetration into tier II cities. The client listed a few of the key challenges as:

1. Tough competition exists from current players in this market
2. Products face rejection because of muscle power of other brands. Also, most products are priced higher compared to the competition owing to their superior quality and established brand value.
3. To be able to create a place in the market, they must grow fast and push sales aggressively.

The client also shared the constitution of the team and their demographics:

1. Team spread across major cities of India
2. Strength of the pan-India team is around 400
3. The primary target audience will include Territory Sales In-charge (TSI) and Territory Sales Manager (TSM)
4. The TSIs and TSMs report to the Area Sales Manager (ASM) and the ASM reports to the Regional Sales Manager (RSM), who in turn reports to the General Manager (Sales).

Expectations from engagement with NIS Sparta

The initial set of expectation came in at two levels: competency enhancement for the TSI, TSM and ASM roles and overall business impact expected from the intervention.

The sales team was expected to:

1. Improve their selling skills
2. Develop the ability to convince and persuade the distributors and retailers
3. Be able to build better relations with the channel members in order to get more business
4. Increase the number of calls made per day
5. The ASMs, additionally, must have better team handling and management skills to manage their teams better.

The client also expressed certain business outcomes that should be achieved as a result of the skill enhancement. They expected the solution to be designed such that it answers the following questions:

1. How do we differentiate our proposition?
2. How do we build value for the customer?
3. How can we increase productivity of our sales team?
4. How can we increase penetration and visibility?
5. How should we build better relationship with the Distributors and Retailers?

Our solution

After the initial set of requirements were collated by NIS Sparta's business and solutioning team, a step-by-step execution plan was created. This plan would help the team understand the problem better and propose an appropriate solution. The first step was to conduct a field study. The objective of the study was to understand the daily field operations of the sales department to ascertain the Learning and Development requirements and identify gaps in skills, knowledge and behaviours. The field study would also capture the interactions of:

- TSI with the Retailer
- TSM with TSI
- TSM/TSI with the Distributor

The study was conducted at the four metros of Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Chennai. The TSIs were observed and ranked on 5 key parameters identified for the category.

Post the study, a detailed observation report and recommendations were presented to the client. The study found that there was a good personal rapport between sales managers and their channel members. Also, the brand was perceived as high-value and high-quality by both the channel team members and consumers.

The study also found areas that needed to be worked upon for making the brand to gain leadership in the market. Key observations included:

- Generic billing target per day is the only focus.
- Interaction between the TSI/TSS/Distributor was not reflecting the business objectives to be met.
- The field team shares a personal rapport with the retailers, however is unable to leverage it for business enhancement. There was a lack of negotiation and assertion
- Both TSS/M and TSI were found to be not aware of the parameters used for analyzing internal (resources) and external (market potential)
- Unable to track the visibility parameters to impact the retail off take Vs retail potential
- Get stuck on price objection

Subsequently, a detailed observation report for each role and resulting gap analysis was presented. These detailed observation results were directly linked to the solution proposed. The solution included both training and non-training recommendations for an all-round impact. The recommendations for training and skill-building were met with series of programs name In Pursuit of New Vistas. Based on these recommendations, a two-day selling skills program was prepared for TSI roles with the following objectives:

- Analyse company's position in the evolving Men's care in India
- Assess a territory's potential through mapping and data analysis
- Create beat plans for optimal coverage
- Plan appropriate targets and product-mix for different retailers
- Apply relationship-building, probing, expectation management and objection handling skills to manage distributors, TSIs and retailers
- Illustrate how to optimise the distributor's ROI
- Analyse effective visual merchandising techniques for product lines

Additionally, a supervisory skills program for the ASMs and TSMs was prepared.

The results: what has been achieved so far

Nine selling skills programs for TSIs and one supervisory skills program for ASMs and TSMs have been completed successfully as per the initial plan.

The client has appreciated the programs and proposed follow-up field visits, dipstick reviews to measure training impact and appraisal of the expected results from the first intervention. They have also proposed supervisory skills programs for Regional Managers and have assured the NIS Sparta Account Manager of a continued engagement with NIS Sparta.