

Case Studies

Examples of Client Engagements

Binder Riha Associates

Introduction

Binder Riha Associates assists Global 2000 and fast-growth companies formulate and implement fact-based performance improvement strategies. We offer performance design and improvement services with a focus on sales, marketing, and customer service productivity and effectiveness.

The scope of our work has been fairly broad, from high-level business and performance strategy planning and best practices analysis to tactical interventions including design and development of performance improvement, knowledge management, and training systems.

A Few Cases

This document covers a range of cases to give you a more concrete understanding of how we work with clients. We have not named client companies in this document since many of them contractually preclude us from disclosing their names in marketing or sales materials.

- Reversing market share decline at a major biotechnology firm
- Redesigning sales enablement at a medical devices company
- Integrating communications at the annual sales meeting of a major chip manufacturer
- Identifying Best Practices in a medical devices company
- Accelerating ramp-up and multiplying productivity in a customer call center
- Building a Sales Performance Consulting team in a Fortune 50 company
- Developing the business plan for a telecommunications start-up

Each of these engagements, and virtually every project we undertake, includes some form of front-end analysis, aimed at identifying optimally effective strategies and tactics.

Reversing Market Share Decline at a Major Biotechnology Company

Business Problem: A biotechnology drug firm was losing market share for its flagship product to a competitive offering that cost about half as much. Clinical studies showed small differences in the efficacy of these products, but sales people had not been able to communicate effectively to customers why they should pay more for a seemingly tiny difference in results.

How We Helped: Based on a strategy of turning complex biostatistics into plain English and emphasizing lives saved by a small difference in the products' mortality rates, we composed a tactical sales guide for sales representatives. Working with a biostatistician, we boiled the

clinical study designs and results down to clear communicable messages, and prepared the sales force to deliver them. As a follow-up to their studying the material, we designed a game for their quarterly sales meeting in which regional teams competed with each other based on their fluent knowledge of critical information. This provided motivation for the pre-study and practice required for achieving such fluency.

Results: Sales people achieved fluency in their ability to communicate key messages about the comparative effectiveness of their product, especially its ability to save lives. The company reversed its slide and achieved greater market share than it had ever held before. (This small tactical guide and its accompanying program represented what is probably the single most cost-effective intervention we have ever produced.)

Redesigning Sales Enablement at a Medical Devices Company

Business Problem: A rapidly growing medical devices company had a history of poorly executed product launches that included overloading its sales force with technical information focused on products, letting the products “leak” into the market after approval, and investing “no more than \$20,000 on launch training” in its history. The core problem was a need for faster market penetration and a more sales-oriented approach to the product launch.

How We Helped: We conducted a performance analysis that revealed an overload of technical information and a virtual absence of knowledge or tools related to market background, customer needs, competitive strategy, or the sales process itself. Using the Product Knowledge Architecture™, we identified a comprehensive scope for knowledge and tools needed to support the launch, designed and built a structured reference base that was modified for each major international market, and built fluency-based training and coaching programs to ensure rapid ramp-up to fluent performance. Our work included sessions with senior Marketing staff that introduced a customer needs-based approach to competitive analysis (in contrast to the usual competitive features approach common in most companies).

Results: The initial program cost over \$200,000 to develop. Nonetheless, after its roll-out the Company decided to revise training and documentation for *all* of its product lines using our model, citing the extraordinary return on the original investment (primarily rapid ramp-up to desired performance levels) to support the additional expenditure.

Over five years later, our Associates continue to work with the Company to maintain and develop new resources for product launches and specific marketing initiatives.

Integrating Communications at the Annual Sales Meeting of a Major Chip Manufacturer

Business Problem: A large semiconductor and computer parts company stages an annual sales meeting for over 2,000 sales representatives and technical sales support professionals. For the week-long conference, participants attend dozens of hour-long presentations by product and technology groups, as well as by senior executives of the Company’s various business units. Historically, the conference has left participants overloaded with information and not as well-prepared to execute sales strategy and tactics as the Company would like.

How We Helped: The Company licensed our Product Knowledge Architecture™ as a standard for gathering, organizing, and presenting information at the sales conference. We conducted half-day workshops in five locations for groups of individuals responsible for creating the breakout session presentations. At the same time, we met with senior staff of the business units to craft a high level outline based on the Product Knowledge Architecture for communicating their business objectives, their analyses of markets and market dynamics, and product roadmaps. The objective was to align the major topics of the high level executive presentations and to integrate them with the breakout session content to present a seamless, consistent, and comprehensive framework of information and messages to the field.

Results: We achieved an unprecedented level of consistency and clarity in messages and content communicated to the field. While it was not possible to attribute specific business outcomes to this intervention, the sales force consistently reported that this was the best, most effective and most useful sales conference ever – the result intended by the Company in seeking out our assistance.

Identifying Best Sales Practices at a Medical Devices Company

Business Problem: Despite rapid sales growth for several years in a row, a medical devices company recognized that it had no replicable sales process to train or manage. Because it lacked direct competition, success in the marketplace so far had been based largely on its cutting-edge technology. However, they recognized that without a defined sales process, it would be impossible to scale the sales organization to meet future objectives. In addition, we heard from the field that training – almost entirely devoted to *technical* content – was neither delivered consistently nor helpful in supporting effective *selling* per se.

How We Helped: We studied existing sales reference and training materials, and interviewed exemplary sales representatives, sales managers, the VP of Sales, and several customers. We also interviewed a few *average* sales people to identify what distinguished the best from the average – the specific factors contributing to exceptional performance. We analyzed findings using our Six Boxes™ model of performance and identified the major accomplishments, critical milestones, key tasks, and factors that enabled or prevented successful performance of those tasks. We arrived at a detailed description of successful sales, which we then reviewed with District Sales Managers in a two-day meeting, and revised based on their additional input.

Results: The tangible product of our work was the Company's first complete, replicable description of the sales process and what is required to execute on that process. Our sessions with the sales managers drove alignment across the sales team about that process, while raising a number of issues suggesting a strategic realignment of the sales organization. The list of accomplishments and milestones in the sales process provided the organization with a means of *measuring* progress in sales and market development. The lists of tasks and enablers gave direction for a more complete and effective set of tools, reference materials, and tactics for *training* and ongoing sales support. In general, the result of this analysis (as with many of the performance analyses we conduct) was a foundation for building and continuously improving a World Class sales organization.

Accelerating Ramp-up and Multiplying Productivity in a Customer Call Center

Business Problem: An innovative business unit in a major telecommunications company sought to improve its new hire training and coaching methods in its customer call centers. Their current representatives were performing just below benchmark performance, with new hires requiring a month or more to achieve the call center average productivity levels.

How We Helped: We trained the business unit manager and several of his key managers and supervisors to apply our research-based FluencyBuilding™ learning and coaching methodology, and helped them completely redesign their new hire training to include exercises and materials focused on specific knowledge requirements and performance outcomes. The transformation produced a two-week new hire program that more resembled a “learning gym” than a traditional classroom program, and was approximately 30% shorter than their previous program. We helped supervisors and lead representatives develop and apply fluency coaching skills, both in the training sessions and on the job.

Results: The new hire program, while requiring one third less time than the previous training, enabled newly hired representatives to achieve benchmark *performance within three days of training*, and to *surpass the call center average productivity level by 60% within two weeks*. Over a two-year period, this team of front-line managers and supervisors has become an exceptional performance development group, among the best we have ever seen.

Building a Sales Performance Consulting Team in a Fortune 50 Company

Business Problem: One of the nation’s largest companies, a business information provider, sought to improve the cost-efficiency and effectiveness of its sales force. An initial analysis revealed a variety of obsolete and ineffective sales models and practices, a failure to meet sales objectives, and significant investments in sales effectiveness that had not yielded appropriate returns (e.g., sales force automation, expanded sales training).

How We Helped: After an initial analysis in which we identified many opportunities for improving performance, the Company decided to invest in a new, field-based performance improvement function – the *Sales Performance Consultant (SPC)*. The VP and EVP of Sales recruited 6 former District Sales Managers and we implemented an 18-month program for these accomplished sales and sales management professionals. They learned how to identify opportunities to improve performance and select cost-effective interventions to support Regional Sales VPs and their teams. In particular, they learned to apply our Six Boxes™ Performance Management model to a wide variety of situations and problems.

Meeting about every six weeks, and providing individual coaching between meetings, we taught the SPCs a set of performance consulting methods and tools that included analysis, design and selection of interventions, and specific tactics addressing various types of performance issues.

Results: We left behind an internal capability to address specific performance improvement opportunities as they were identified. Examples of solutions included:

- SPCs helped improve use of the sales automation and reduce training costs by ordering second phone lines for field sales people who had not been using their sales automation, despite repeated training interventions. Six Boxes analysis revealed that failure to use the system stemmed from not having both voice and data lines in their shared cubicles rather than from a lack of training (which had been accelerated at significant cost).
- They achieved a dramatic improvements in close ratios after studying and “institutionalizing” the behavior of exemplary sales reps who had developed extremely accurate methods for disqualifying leads at the beginning of the sales process. Those exemplary reps did not waste time or sales calls on almost half the leads that most other sales people would otherwise pursue. By teaching the field to use a similar qualifying process, the SPCs leveraged a “best practice” to improve overall sales performance.

Developing the Business Plan for a Telecommunications Start-up

Business Problem: The founders of a telecommunications start-up engaged us to help them write a compelling business plan and investor presentation, and to facilitate their strategic planning process. While they were highly experienced senior executives in the markets targeted by their company, with requests for product development from customers already on the table, they recognized the value of improving the effectiveness of their sales and marketing communications with potential investors.

How We Helped: This case is an ideal example of how we add value in the formulation and communication of business strategies and value propositions without being experts in the particular industries we serve. One of our Senior Partners worked with the executive team of the start-up – a group of individuals who bring World Class manufacturing, operational, and industry expertise to their new venture. Over a period of two months, she probed, challenged, and facilitated discussion among the members of the team, while integrating and editing their inputs into a compelling business plan format.

In the process, she conducted a brief Customer Needs Model™ exercise, in which she facilitated development of a framework for describing the needs of potential customers and market segments. This component of our Product Knowledge Architecture™ (PKA) brings value to nearly every stage of the sales and marketing process, from initial formulation of market strategy through sales enablement. She used the overall PKA framework in developing the topics and sequence of the business plan, changing it from a more traditional product-centric communication into a more effective customer-focused sales and marketing document. In addition, she created the Executive Summary and Investor Presentation for use by the CEO in raising funds and engaging new partner-customers.

Results: The Company raised several rounds of venture capital and is on its way, during a period in which dozens of similar companies went under for lack of strategy and funding.