



# **TRAINING SUCCESS: DECREASE CALL RELUCTANCE<sup>®</sup>, INCREASE SALES**

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Sales call reluctance<sup>®</sup> refers to the hesitation or inability to initiate contact with prospective buyers in sufficient numbers. Across industries, eighty percent of all beginning salespeople fail to complete one year in sales despite the product they sell, the sales training they receive, or their personal belief in the value of the product or service they represent. Sales call reluctance<sup>®</sup> also influences the productivity of veteran salespeople.

The purpose of the study was to see whether specialized training designed to reverse the effects of sales call reluctance<sup>®</sup> had any effect upon immediate performance and, if so, how early the effect can be measured.

## **METHOD**

Sixteen salespeople hired to sell insurance for a large insurance company were assigned to one of two groups according to sales training they were to receive. The groups were matched as closely as possible in terms of age, sex, products sold, tenure in sales, and other important variables.

The eight sales people in the experimental group participated in standardized FEAR-FREE PROSPECTING & SELF-PROMOTION WORKSHOP<sup>®</sup> (FFP&SW). The FFP&SW is a comprehensive multi-dimensional, multi-modal array of cognitive and behavioral procedures specifically designed to increase prospecting activity by removing self-imposed barriers due to fear. Workshop participants were exposed to the entire program including a textbook, workbook, diagnostic test, personalized action plan, and “Accel,” a 21-day attitude-shaping follow-up procedure specifically designed for and integral to the course. A consultant certified to teach the course provided training.

The eight subjects assigned to the control group also were provided sales training to offset potential placebo effects known to be associated with receiving attention and training of any type. The controls were exposed to less-specific, generic sales training of the type salespeople are typically exposed to, such as presentation skills and closing techniques. To equalize the groups further, the control group was provided incomplete access to FFP&SW components. Each completed the SPQ\*GOLD<sup>®</sup> and was provided limited personal feedback based on results to help improve prospecting performance.

Pre-intervention performance baselines were established for both groups prior to exposure to training. The measures used were selected by the sponsoring company and included total commissions (earnings) per group and total number of contacts initiated with prospective buyers for the group. Base rates for sales, computed from the previous 12 months, also were provided. Prospecting base rates, covering contact activity for the 4-6 weeks preceding the study, were calculated for participants assigned to the experimental group but not for the controls. Prospecting data were reduced further to “seen” calls and “phone” calls a common distinction in formal studies of sales effectiveness.

## RESULTS

After 21 workdays, performance for both groups on each of the criteria dimensions was measured. Total commissions for the control group increased \$1,691.00 (5%) ( $t=.254$ ,  $p=.403$ ) over base rate commissions for the preceding 12 months of productions. Total commissions for the experimental group increased \$15,619.00 (47%) ( $t=1.832$ ,  $p=.055$ ) over base rate. These results translate into an average increase in sales commissions of \$210.38 per person for the control group, as shown in the chart below. By comparison, there was an average increase in sales commissions of \$2082.50 for sales people assigned to the experimental group.

CHART 1  
Pre/Post Commissions Comparisons  
for Experimental and Control Groups

| Group        | Pre-Commissions<br>Mean | <i>SD</i>     | Post-Commissions<br>Mean | <i>SD</i>     | t     | p     |
|--------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------|-------|-------|
| Experimental | <b>\$6359</b>           | <i>\$3593</i> | <b>\$8441</b>            | <i>\$2457</i> | 1.834 | 0.055 |
| Control      | <b>\$4631</b>           | <i>\$1577</i> | <b>\$4841</b>            | <i>\$3073</i> | 0.254 | 0.403 |

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study, although promising, are tentative due to the limited sample size available. But while confident statistical generalizations may be inadvisable, certain practical considerations are possible.

Both groups showed production gains during the measurement period. The slight increases recorded by the control group can be explained by the combination of limited exposure to elements of call reluctance<sup>®</sup> training and attention from sales management. The large increases

associated with the experimental group, however, cannot be explained on the basis of these two phenomena alone. These data suggest that one or more elements of the fully complemented FFP&SW do positively influence sales prospecting behaviors.