

Huthwaite helps deliver **all round sales improvement** at RSA Canada



Change Behaviour. Change Results.™

“This was a true partnership that delivered outstanding results.”

Hannah Springer, former Development Sales Manager - RSA Canada

RSA (formerly Royal & Sun Alliance) Canada, originally formed in 1845, today is part of one of the world’s leading insurance groups.

Following a major restructuring of the Group, leading behaviour change consultancy, Huthwaite International, was appointed to develop a global training programme to improve selling skills - as an integral part of a broader change initiative to create a stronger sales-oriented culture and business focus.

“However, though we had been appointed as preferred training provider at Group level,” says delivery services manager, Barry Hazelwood, “it was essential to understand the particular requirements of each individual country’s sales operation, in order to develop an effective customised, training response which would secure full buy-in at both senior management and field sales level.”

The results achieved in RSA Canada in particular provide a typical example of Huthwaite’s unique flexibility in delivering consistent high-quality training programmes tailored to meet the

needs of each local market, with uniformly outstanding results.

Establishing need

As part of the initial diagnostic process, Huthwaite undertook field sales accompaniments with several business development managers in the Greater Toronto area, followed by a generic web-based sales questionnaire to all Business Development Managers and their regional vice presidents (the equivalent of sales managers).

“The purpose of this research was to establish and compare the perceptions of both BDMs and RVPs as to the relative importance of generic sales activities within the BDM’s role and their relative level of skill in each,” confirms Hazelwood. “Armed with this information and the objectives which RSA Canada wanted to achieve in terms of sales performance, working closely with the local management team we were then able to put together a proposal based on a realistic assessment of what was required to bridge the gap.”

The research findings broadly validated RSA Canada’s belief at the outset that there was a need to move away from an essentially feature-led approach to selling the company’s products and services – not uncommon in the industry – to a more consultative style, one which emphasised the value of RSA’s market differentiators, so protecting margin erosion and driving competitive advantage.

“The results were encouraging - BDMs and their managers

generally agreed that face-to-face skills were the most important element in the BDM’s armoury in working with their broker contacts,” recalls Hazelwood. “And a healthy lack of complacency was evident, as there appeared to be a common appetite for training and ongoing follow-up coaching.”

A flexible approach

Importantly, as part of its training proposal to the RSA Canada management team, Huthwaite made a number of additional recommendations to enhance existing processes and procedures, in order to ensure that sales improvement could take place in the best possible operational environment.

In developing an appropriate sales improvement programme for the team of BDMs and RVPs, Huthwaite had to incorporate two elements uniquely designed to meet RSA Canada’s specific needs.

First, it had to take into account that, unusually, Canada was a heavily intermediated market. As a result, all training materials and role-plays had to reflect a commercial environment in which all the company’s sales were achieved through brokers, to be credible and accurately mirror the real-world experience of the participants.

In addition, in a huge country with a widely-dispersed sales team, it was agreed to include the SPIN® Selling Skills and Coaching Skills Programmes within the company’s annual sales conference in Toronto.

“This unusual approach to sales training was especially cost-effective,” confirms Hazelwood, “yet demanded a high level of flexibility on the part of Huthwaite as training provider and those being trained.”

“The complex logistics required extremely careful choreography to ensure the performance improvement element of the conference wasn’t squeezed. RSA Canada’s commitment and realistic view of what it wanted to achieve avoided the risk of training being marginalised within the broader event.”

At the same time, he highlights how this approach also offered another benefit, by creating the opportunity to integrate the company’s sales messages within the training programme in a uniquely topical way. *“Put simply, each morning the RSA management team would provide the messaging relating to what the sales team had to achieve and in the afternoon Huthwaite would provide the tools showing how to achieve it.”*

The following example shows how this worked. During the conference, the sales team was shown how recently-reorganised back office systems were designed to improve service levels to brokers, by for example turning round claims much more quickly. In the afternoon, Huthwaite trainers were then able to explore in detail existing issues and problems experienced by RSA’s broker customers and how the sales team might position this improved capability to best competitive advantage.

Follow-up

The sales training programme took place over three days, with RVPs receiving a further two days’ coaching training.

Before the training programme took place, local management had identified a number of success criteria, all of which have been achieved. In addition to higher sales targets, RSA Canada was keen to build a stronger team ethos and minimise staff attrition: it also wished to gauge the ongoing effectiveness of both the sales training and coaching, in particular by assessing client feedback via annual broker reviews.

As part of this, after six months Huthwaite undertook a follow-up on-line questionnaire to assess the reactions of BDMs and RVPs regarding the impact of the training and coaching. Overall, the SPIN® methodology has been almost universally valued and in particular has helped in the planning, conduct and review of sales calls.

Both groups felt that SPIN® has been easy to apply, has improved skills and contributed directly to sales success. Critically, respondents felt they could identify links between SPIN® deployment and specific sales success, so making a definable contribution to improved sales performance.

Supporting this, individual RVPs pointed to specific new accounts in which SPIN® was seen as instrumental in helping secure large \$250,000+ premiums.

Similarly, BDMs identified how new questioning techniques have, *“led the broker to areas where we know we have a value-add”* Also, SPIN® *“has helped resist ‘giving away the farm’, holding back all the great things we do and focusing on the things that are meaningful to the client.”*

In summary, for Hannah Springer, the then sales development manager at RSA Canada, *“the success of our sales effectiveness programme (SEP) was capitalising on all the work we had already done. We knew what we wanted it to achieve and Huthwaite showed us how we could achieve it and gave us the tools to do so. This was a true partnership that delivered outstanding results.”*





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