

Problem Solving Workshops

The Process

Working with you to develop the brief, the process includes pre-workshop guidance and post workshop / programme support for the implementation of winning ideas.

A project consists of single or multiple workshops, either on-site or at a suitable off site location where the team can work without interruption. A Management Sponsor introduces the issue to be addressed, and team members take ownership. The opportunity is clarified, solutions developed and evaluated and implementation plans formed. At the end of the workshop the process and output is recorded and presented to the Sponsor for approval and progressing.



“It’s amazing what you can achieve if you are all pulling in the same direction at the same time.”

Examples include Innovative ideas and solutions for addressing pressing business performance issues, improving sales performance, winning sales bids, taking advantage of new market opportunities, launching new products and services and developing and implementing business strategies - addressing the challenges your organisation is facing.

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Team Planning Environment

Team Planning uses: a controlled environment, ground rules, specific roles and structured process, and incorporates creative thinking and problem solving techniques. It helps sales and marketing teams, functional, cross functional and cross organizational work groups and problem solving teams tackle business opportunities and meet organizational objectives.

Workshops are hard work, fun and stimulating, creating a real team-working environment.

Individuals bond and work better together, productivity increases, energy and enthusiasm are multiplied and people feel they have a stake in the company's success.

Team Planning techniques were first introduced by the USA Military before being adapted by leading business schools. We have experience of implementing these methods across a range of business projects. Based on our experience we have further refined the approach and the tools and techniques to facilitate business innovation workshops, that deliver Competitive Advantage.

“People Try Hard to Make a Success of Something They Have Helped to Create”

Case Study 1: How to win a key major account sales bid?

The Company responded to an invitation to tender (ITT), for a major contract in a large publicly owned organisation. They were already suppliers to this organisation. However, they were now dealing with a different division, which had very little knowledge of their products and services. Competition was very intense and this was a very important opportunity for the long-term development of the sales account.

What We Did:

Called in by the sales division to lead the response to this ITT we formed a problem solving team from sales and support resources and set about deciding the nature of the response. The requirements were complex and a creative and innovative solution was required if we were to succeed. One of the customer needs related to a comprehensive sales contract ledger, quite different from any existing standard product. A totally bespoke solution was out of the question on cost grounds. By investigating various alternatives we were able to prepare a creative solution part of which involved reversing a purchase contract ledger from a completely different programme suit.

The Results:

The sales bid was successful. As a result of winning this bid the company was invited to tender for further contracts in other new areas of this division. The resulting contracts amounted to several million pounds of business over a number of years.

Case Study 2: How to develop a sales and marketing strategy for a new product programme in a key sector?

Situation:

A Divisional Sales Director approached a product development plant with a requirement for technical resources to support his sales team in a key market sector. The plant was reluctant to release scarce resources, especially since the Division had not developed a clear sales or marketing strategy for their product programme in the sector.

What We Did:

Asked to work with the Sales Director to resolve the situation, we organised and led a problem solving workshop. The problem solving team comprised representatives from sales, marketing, support personnel from the sales division, and representatives from the development organisation, and corporate planning. We defined the customer needs, evaluated competitive products and services, performed a SWOT analysis and positioned the company and product set. We then developed an action plan to attack the market place.

The Results:

The conflict between the development organisation and the sales division was resolved. The sales and marketing action plan was put into practise. The strategy was so successful that the plant agreed to focus all its spare resource to support the sales team. The market sector became the most successful for the product set on a worldwide basis and the company achieved a leading position in the market sector.

Case Study 3: How to get a new product programme back on track?

Situation:

In a large multinational organisation, a new product development programme was running into trouble, there was internal conflict and the programme was behind schedule. The development team was telling the marketing groups how they intended to develop the product, its content, features and characteristics, and release schedule, etc. The different marketing groups disagreed with the development plans, but had no common view of the product requirements or release plan and the international sales divisions had a customer base waiting for a more advanced solution for their needs.

What We Did:

We organised and facilitated a problem solving workshop with a cross-functional and cross-organisational team, made up of product management, product marketing, marketing, sales and technical support personnel, representing all the interested parties. We then addressed various questions relating to different market / customer needs, product specification, and release plans.

The Results:

By pulling the marketing groups together behind a common plan we were able to define and justify requirements to the development team. The product programme was rescheduled to meet a new phased development & release plan - reducing the pressure on the development team. Based on the new plans the marketing groups were able to prepare their product release plans and training programmes for sales and field support staff. The workshop was so successful that the Systems Engineering Director who sponsored the workshop said, "If these are the results we can expect from planning workshops you have my permission to run them at any time you think necessary - you need no further approval."

Case Study 4: How to revitalise a failing sales team?

Situation:

In a large multinational organisation a sales team was falling significantly behind its sales targets (predictions were a shortfall of several million pounds by year end). The company had recently introduced a new sales and marketing programme to sell solutions as an OEM to another industry supplier (their previous expertise being to compete in the large systems market on a technical basis). The sales team had been trained in solution selling and having achieved their targets in the first year were now falling behind.

What We Did:

We organised and facilitated a sales problem solving workshop. We put together a cross functional and cross organisational team, made up of marketing, sales, technical support, representatives from the OEM and other strategic partners. Then using Team Planning techniques we addressed various questions relating to different market / customer needs, existing product programmes, sales strategy and support programmes, new service specifications, and release plans.

The Results:

After some discussion the group soon realised that the key lay not in their product programmes but in the major business issues facing their customers. We identified what the customer issues were and how the company's products addressed these. Based on this we identified the new sales, marketing and product and service programmes that needed to be developed. A number

of key issues were identified for action planning. A closer working relationship was built between the various organisations and the team took ownership for developing the new programmes. The sales team went on to achieve their targets for the year.

Case Study 5: Resolving problem solving process issues in manufacturing company

Situation:

The Company was encountering problems with quality failures in finished products. When this occurred the manufacturing line was stopped and production delayed. Faults were intermittent and different solutions were tested and some worked - but only temporarily before the problem reoccurred. When a fault was identified it could be addressed during day shift but with demand for the company's products increasing and with overnight production, valuable time was being lost. Whilst product problems were discovered before distribution to the end customer, manufacturing costs were increasing and on-time delivery was becoming an issue.

What We Did:

Called in by the General Manager to review the problem solving process, we formed a team from the senior production and quality management staff. Using a form of the technique 'Subject Problem Mapping' the current problem solving process and tools and techniques were documented / mapped. This was then compared with a standard model and the differences noted. A new process was then developed taking into account both approaches to create a system tailored to the company's manufacturing process and based on best practise.

The Results:

At the end of the workshop a new problem solving process was flow charted. The process was tested against a current problem situation and previously unidentified possible root causes were identified. These were investigated and solutions implemented. The quality problems were resolved and manufacturing got back on track. The new model was implemented and became part of the company's standard procedures.