

# reference project

## sales leadership as a key to sustainable growth

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### The challenge that it started with

The context of this project was a leading global chemical company that was facing the challenge of how to emphasize sales leadership as a key differentiating factor in the global market. Prices are increasingly under pressure from asian competitors that are catching up, buying and copying modern production technology and dumping prices in mature markets.

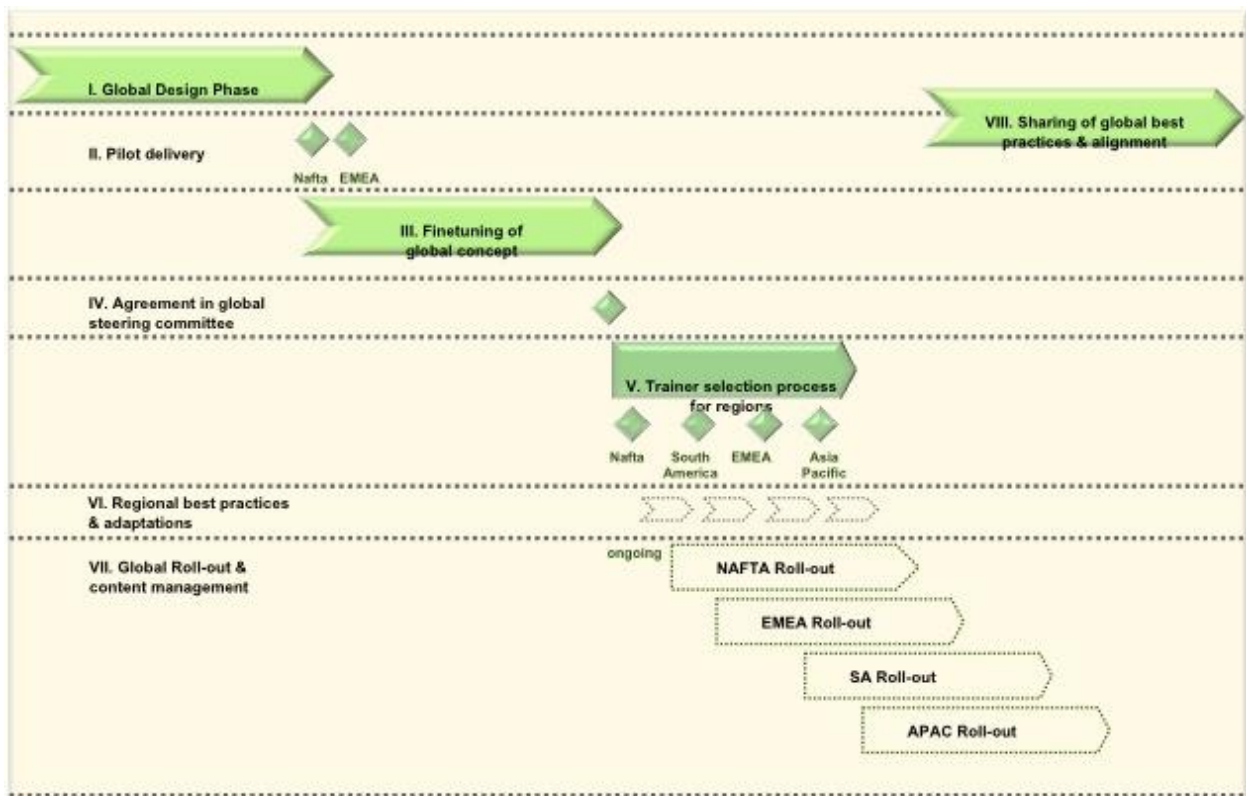
The client identified the global top five thousand sales leaders as the target group to shift the sales culture towards a more customer-centric

and cross-business unit centred approach to sustainably support profitable growth.

For many years this target group has been neglected in terms of personal development measures even though it was one of the most important pillars for business performance.

The client initiated a “senior project“ directly reporting to the board to underline the top priority. We were asked to design a global concept and to support the regional adaptation process. The architecture for the project looked like the following.

### Concept design and Roll-out architecture



After the first phase of global concept (1), pilot delivery (2) and fine tuning of the global concept (3) we finalized this first phase with the concept agreement in the global steering committee (4).

We initiated a regional process of trainer selection in NAFTA, South America, Asia Pacific and EMEA (5) and went through a process of incorporating regional best practices and allowing space for adaptations within the given framework (6: e.g. Sales Coaching as a must with the opportunity to use existing coaching models from the regional training curricula).

Currently we are in the process of global rollout and content management (7) incorporating feedback and best practices into the global concept as we assure the global alignment within the given frame. Our role is to deliver the training in the EMEA region and to concurrently support the new steering model that emerged during this process between the global headquarter and the regions.



#### **The gear box between concept and implementation**

In the first dimension steering the change we focused on the alignment of the different streams and stakeholder groups in the program. In the second stream creating commitment and regional roll out we were facing the challenge that we had to take into account very different dynamics within the regional management teams (1). Some teams were facing radical changes and staff layoffs while other regions were setting up new regional management

teams and recruiting key players from the market to support growth. The knowledge transfer in this perceived loose-win situation was quite challenging since the transfer of best practices into the growth regions was one of the key success factors for the program. In order to create a common basis of key messages and yet allow regional adaptations according to their specific needs we created and agreed a design blueprint (2) that we then tailored together with the regional management teams (3). For the process it was important to show active ownership and leadership from the regional management team and to address the hot topics of the new setup.

From an external staff perspective we were facing the challenge to pass on the insights of the regional discussions and adaptations into the next region quickly. We managed this using the “relay staff principle” where one of us passed over the baton by co-facilitating a region before he took over the lead of the next region (4).

#### **Behind the scenes**

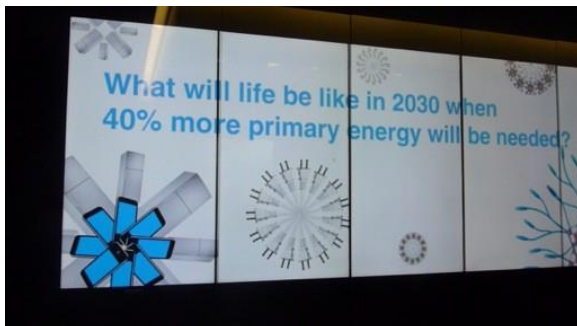
Ups and downs from a consultant's perspective We set up a lean global design staff with one external consultant (the project lead), one internal change consultant and the concept project lead.

One of the major challenges we faced was that we had to deal with a number of resonances the project wrestled with. The project oscillated between different poles in a number of dimensions, specifically:

- How centrally-decentrally should we steer the project (degree of true involvement)?
- How do we position the content between sales expertise, new roles and setup and the focus on leading virtual teams?

- How do we address the different learning styles of the regions (“tell me” versus participative/process)?
- How do we deal with the tension that regional sales won’t quite accept a “central project” telling them “how to do sales”?

Somehow we didn’t manage to properly create a clear positioning of the program during the concept phase within those different areas of tension. This resulted in a program that was partially highly complex. For instance, we designed very complex sales case study to address some of the implicit hot topics around new roles and responsibilities. To address the implicit blame that the headquarters are not competent in sales issues we delivered the training together with an American training institute specialized in time management in sales. Obviously this institute was representing a very North American training style.



In order to get a sounding from a pilot group we organized a pilot training in North America and received devastating feedback. In a reflection we identified four root causes for this failure:

1. over engineered / over complex case study
2. unclear positioning of program
3. underestimation of cultural tensions between the headquarter and decentralized sales teams
4. too short on-boarding process for trainer staff.

We even considered cancelling the European pilot that was scheduled for the following week.

After a crisis meeting we decided to stick with the schedule, deliver the pilot and concurrently incorporate the findings and feedbacks from the first pilot.

With this new concept the feedbacks were by far more positive. Interestingly in Europe the specialized North American training institute received critical feedbacks. This was mainly related to the training style and mirrored the cultural learning preferences.

This group we involved in a deep dialogue around the future positioning of the program. We were able to incorporate much valuable insight into the final concept. Additionally we gave a bigger degree of freedom in tailoring the program, especially with regards to didactics. If you are interested in finding out more about the regionalization call Torsten Jung +43 699 136 880 81.