

Main Street Model for Sales Training

When a small, but fast growing technology company's plans are to become the largest provider of local search engine advertising in the world, equipping hundreds of new hire sales consultants, managers and support personnel in 24 months was no easy task. However, ReachLocal's Global Learning & Performance Systems team, along with full C-level support, built a dynamic learning & simulation program within the entity named Main Street University @ ReachLocal.

Company Overview

Through patent-pending technology and a dedicated sales force, ReachLocal (<http://www.reachlocal.com>) brings small- and medium-sized businesses around the world a solution for reaching consumers who are searching for local products and services online to purchase offline. While millions of consumers are abandoning traditional methods of search, ReachLocal helps businesses follow these shoppers online by making 98 percent of the search engine landscape available to them, including Google, Yahoo!, MSN and Internet Yellow Pages. The result is a simple, scalable and affordable platform local businesses need to create, maintain, track and analyze their Internet search advertising campaigns.

Challenge

In 2006, ReachLocal began to build its organizational infrastructure to support the explosive growth of their sales force, opening new local offices across the U.S. every 3-4 weeks. The keys to success were equipping each new class of sales consultants with technical, product and sales training that simulated as close to "real-world" as possible and penetrating their local market immediately following training.

Key Initiative

Create a simulated sales setting in an environment as close to reality as possible prior to our new sales consultants returning to their local markets and approaching real customers in their local metro area.

In addition to enhancing consultative selling skills and product knowledge through practical application, two additional areas of focus were to increase the "time-to-appointment" and "time-to-sale" once the consultants returned to their local markets.

Solution

Led by Dan Duren, Director of ReachLocal's Global Learning & Performance Systems team, ReachLocal instituted both phone and premise sales simulations as they brought the entire training process under one roof, complete with a six-business street and state-of-the-art technology to facilitate the learning process at Main Street University @ ReachLocal, in Dallas.



To maximize their understanding of the ReachLocal product and service, sales consultants simulate not only their own role, but also the client role – providing scenario-based objections to their classmates while sitting at the desk of their assumed role as business owner. Professional actors are brought in later in the week for the ultimate test of their newly-learned premise sales techniques. The professional actors pose as

owners for businesses such as a law office, an auto body shop, a lasik surgery center and a roofing company.

Each business on ReachLocal's Main Street is equipped with an unassuming video camera linked to plasma monitors in the classroom to provide real-time evaluation. Phone calls are also evaluated by a coach as sales consultants place actual calls to the businesses "across the street".

Business Benefits

- On average Time-to-Scheduled Appointment increased by approximately 50-75%
- On average Time-to-Sale increased by approximately 40-60%
- Sales Consultants are far more equipped and prepared to approach real customers.

"I've worked for some big companies and this, for me, was by far the best training program."

Melissa Rojas
Internet Marketing Consultant,
ReachLocal, Houston



Impact

Since the implementation of ReachLocal's orientation program and "Main Street" model for sales simulation...

- on average Time-to-Scheduled Appointment increased by approximately 50-75%.
- on average Time-to-Sale increased by approximately 40-60%.
- sales Consultants are far more equipped and prepared to approach real customers as they return to their local market.



** ReachLocal plans to conduct 17 of these orientation weeks for new sales consultants in 2008. While the University is not in session, Duren sees plans for the space that include renting out to area businesses for sales & technology training; recruitment activities; sales staff meetings; prospective client visits; and the Virtual Classroom Broadcast Center for those conducting live, online training sessions from Dallas.*