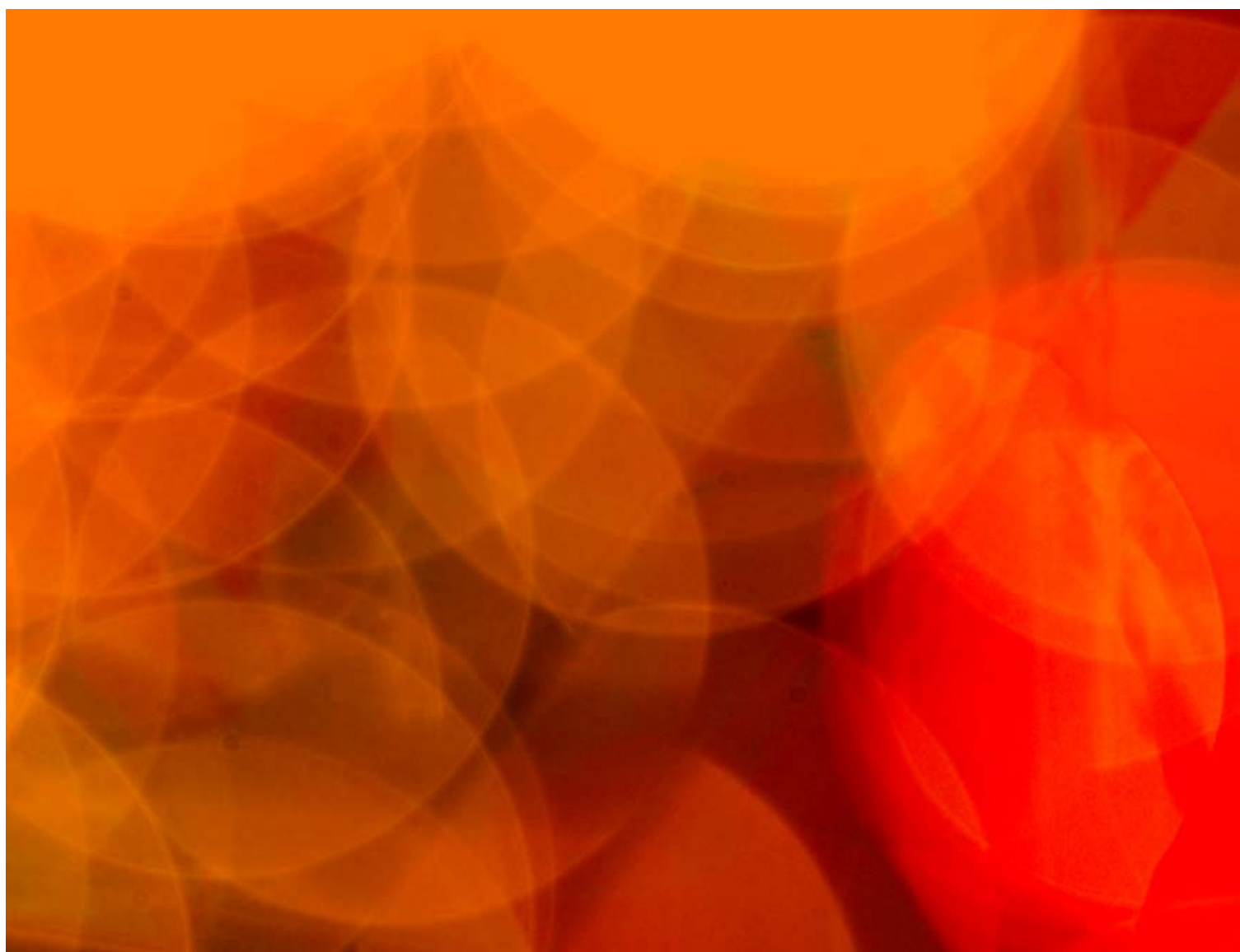


WCS

Developing Responsive Provision



Sales training helps meet Train to Gain targets

Westminster Kingsway College took advantage of the Development Programme for Train to Gain to boost sales to employers.



Figure 1: Sarah Lumsden, Westminster Kingsway Business Development Manager, promoting the Train to Gain Service

Introduction

Westminster Kingsway College in central London provides a range of education and training programmes in three main areas: business, health and hospitality. The College's dedicated Employer Training Solutions service promotes the Train to Gain service, among other solutions, to employers throughout the London metropolitan area.

Business development manager Sarah Lumsden is part of a team of three, with responsibility for meeting the College's challenging targets for Train to Gain learners.

The organisation and the Programme

Although the Employer Training Solutions team had some experience in sales account management, they felt unprepared when it came to selling the Train to Gain service. To address this, the College arranged for two members of the team to attend a four-day Sales Skills Training Course as part of the Development Programme for Train to Gain.

Context

The demands of selling courses as part of the Train to Gain service were completely different to anything the College had tackled before. Sarah Lumsden came to the College from a commercial background and was given quite a free rein to put appropriate processes in place. Her team, however, had little experience of cold-calling customers and appointment setting, which were obviously skills that would be needed in selling Train to Gain if they were going to achieve their targets. They also needed some pointers to help convert more appointments into sales.

Sarah and a key colleague also enrolled on the Sales Skills Training Course online, via the Development Programme for Train to Gain website. The course took place over four sessions, each building on the learning of the last.

Many of the methods they were taught were things they were already doing to some extent but the sales skills training set everything in an overall framework, so that it became part of a clear process from start to finish. On top of that, the training really helped to change behaviour, so that they thought about sales in a different way. It was as much about developing a new mindset as it was about providing practical sales tools. They also made some excellent networking contacts with other people on the course.

Challenges and solutions

Meeting a challenging target for Train to Gain was at first a daunting prospect but the sales training engendered confidence in tackling cold-calling and face-to-face meetings, as well as offering a step-by-step process.

Measurement of sales progress had been subjective and sporadic. Training highlighted the need to keep track of sales leads and conduct follow-up in a timely and appropriate manner. A database system is now being set up to record and monitor sales activities, so that everyone in the organisation has access to the information they need.

Sales support materials such as case studies were thin on the ground and under-used. New Train to Gain case studies are currently being developed to provide extra credibility and support in sales meetings where needed. Sales training also taught the team how to introduce written materials at the most effective stage of a meeting, rather than putting them all on the table at the beginning.

The training offered by the Development Programme for Train to Gain has been of very high quality in our experience.

The sales skills training didn't just preach best practice, it also gave us the tools to apply the theory in real-life sales situations. Even though we were doing many of the right things before, the confidence of having a proper framework and process to guide us has been a big help.

Sarah Lumsden, Business Development Manager,
Westminster Kingsway College

Key messages / learning points / outcomes

- Common anxieties over cold calling can be more easily overcome if there is a tried-and-tested process to follow.
- Using open questions to probe an employer's business needs is more likely to result in a sale than a blunter 'yes or no' approach.
- A successful sales conversation will always emphasise the key features of Train to Gain and the corresponding benefits, not just talk about training for training's sake.
- Relevant, easy-to-read case studies can add credibility and reassurance when used at key points during sales meetings.

Links

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Impact

Sales skills training was the starting point for behavioural change in the Employer Training Solutions team, prompting a re-evaluation of all customer-facing activities.

Although it is not long since the training was completed, the College already reports an increase in the number of sales meetings secured and the number of Train to Gain learners secured, on average, after each meeting.

Using the 'drill down' process learnt during sales skills training, the team now finds they are more in control of sales meetings. The open questions that form part of the method mean that employers are encouraged to talk about their business needs, rather than giving 'yes or no' answers that might bring the meeting to a halt prematurely.

Top tips

- Prepare and rehearse a 'thumbnail' outline of your organisation. It's a good way to open meetings, especially if you tailor it to the audience you are addressing.
- Don't 'tell' employers what you have to offer all at once; focus on one feature at a time, explaining the specific benefits of each as you go.
- Hold back on product presentations until you have the employer's agreement on what the needs of the organisation really are.
- Use a variety of open questions, ie 'why', 'what', 'when', 'where', 'how', to find out what the employer really wants.

Useful information

For case studies that provide details of successful training outcomes with employers visit www.employert Trainingsolutions.co.uk

Next steps

New team members will be sent on the Sales Skills Training Course in future, as the Westminster Kingsway's Employer Training Solutions programme grows.

Westminster Kingsway is also planning further sales training for a broader range of employees who may be in contact with customers.