

Developing coaching skills for SKF in Belgium and Italy

SKF Belgium

Huthwaite has worked with SKF for a number of years providing training around the world. One interesting application of Huthwaite's methods has arisen recently in Belgium where the engineering multinational relies on distributors for part of its business. This requires delicate balancing as SKF tries to keep in close contact with the market without getting in the way of the distributors' channels. SKF also has to help distributors through a very professional selling approach. SKF recruited Huthwaite Belgium to develop trust and understanding through common development of professional skills.

Sales training

Huthwaite's Roland Jonkers trained the SKF-Belgium sales force in sales techniques — one of the first implementations of SPIN® in the SKF group outside Sweden. For them, this was an opportunity to test the validity of sales training in the field with their direct customers.



Coaching Skills

Stage two was to introduce the sales team to coaching skills. They very quickly reached a level at which they were able to do a real coaching and development job in the field. Stage three was that the salesforce of the distributor was also trained in SPIN® Sales Techniques. And now, when SKF salesmen join a distributor salesman it is no longer to sell or only to solve his problems, but mainly to prepare the call, to observe colleagues during the visit, and to give feedback afterwards. First impressions are that the SKF distributor force is very keen on being coached this way — its a unique way of improving the relationship between supplier and distributor.

SKF Italy

Although 1995 turnover figures for SKF in Italy show an increase of 35% on the previous year, SKF still value investment in training. As a result the sales and service engineering staff have been involved in sales training programmes assisted by on-the-job coaching.

Market leadership

Commenting on the training, Sergio Gasca, South Europe Industrial Division Manager said, *"Our objective is to be recognised as the market leader. Offering higher value to our customers is essential to achieving this. We believe that sales training is more useful if there is the opportunity to anticipate changes in the market rather than training people under the pressure of poor results."*

Building competitive advantage

"Price does not gain us the competitive advantage, therefore, we need to demonstrate added value to our products and be effective at selling that added value. Superior quality of products and services is important, but the foundation for building long-term customer relationships is a better understanding of customer requirements. This sales training is an excellent method to help both customers and us to be more value-oriented."

"This sales training is an excellent method to help both customers and us to be more value-oriented."

Sergio Gasca, South Europe Industrial Division Manager