Training And motivating sales personnels

Defining the specific and general aims of a training programme is the first step in training. General aims are translated into specific aims phrased in operational terms. These can be defined in two ways: 1. Identify initial training needs. 2. Continuing sales training programmes.

Identifying Initial Training Needs

The initial training needs of sales training programme can be identified by the analysis of three main factors.

Job Specification

The qualifications needed to perform the job are detailed in job specification. The set of job specifications needs scrutinising for clues to the points on which new personnel are most likely to need training.

Trainee's Background and Experience

The gap between the qualifications in the job specifications and those a trainee already has represents the nature and amount of training needed. But it is not always practical to adjust training precisely to individual differences and time and money are saved by putting all recruits through identical programmes. In all organisation's determination of the recruits real training needs is essential to developing initial training programmes of optimum benefit to company and trainee alike.

Sales-related Marketing Policies

The analysis of sales related marketing policies is also necessary to determine initial sales training needs because the differences in products, markets and their selling practices and policies determines the differences in training programmes. For example, selling of highly technical goods involves training with lot of product information while selling of non-technical goods involves only initial sales training programmes.

Identifying Continuing Sales Training Programmes

The identification of continuing sales training needs means to identify training needs of experienced sales personnel which are felt due to changes in market, product, marketing policies, procedures, organisation and even in the sales personnel itself. 8.3 Content of Training

The content of training is not the same for all the sales training programmes. It varies from company to company because of differences in products, markets, company policies, trainees' ability and experience and organisational size. Every initial sales training programme comprises mainly four areas: product data, sales technique, markets and company information.

Product Data

Product training depends on the nature of the product – if the product is highly technical then they will devote more than half of their programme to product training, if the product is nontechnical, then minimal amount of product training is required. But in all the cases the sales person should know about the products, their uses and applications to serve customers' information needs.

Sales Technique

There are two views in this context. Some sales managers believe that if an individual has an attractive personality, good appearance, voice and reasonable intelligence and knows the product, he will sell it easily. But the predominant view is that new sales personnel need basic instruction in how to sell. This view is reflected in most of the companies.

Markets

The sales person needs to know who the customers are, their particular locations and particular products in which they are interested. Not only this, the sales person should also know about their buying habits, motives and their financial condition. But the training in this context should not be stagnant, it should be continuous because markets are always changing.

Company Information

The company should essentially inform the sales person about the company's pricing policy, product services, spare parts and repairs, credit extension and customer relations. To boost the employee morale and job effectiveness, the company should also provide information to the sales personnel about their selection procedure, training programmes, compensation, incentive systems, advancement requirements and opportunities, savings and retirement plans, medical and insurance plans.

Methods of Training

The selection of appropriate training method for a training programme depends on the content of training. Few of the important and appropriate methods of sales training are: lecture, conference, demonstration, replaying, case-discussion, impromptu discussion, gaming, on-the-job training, programmed learning, correspondence course.

The Lecture

Lecture is the method of learning through instructions from trainer to trainee. Trainees mainly watch and listen, although some versions of lecturing permit questions.

Advantages

1. It is more economical as compared to other methods. 2. It is the only method to cover the desired training content if initial sales training is brief. 3. It is the only practical way to handle instructions when the training group is too large but it can also provide training appropriately to smaller training groups through summary of major topics.

Disadvantages

1. Teaching is emphasised more than learning. 2. Only one-way communication between trainer and trainee prevails.

8.4.2 Personal Conference

The personal conference is an unstructured and informal method. It varies with the personalities of the trainer and the trainee and the topics discussed. The trainer and trainee jointly analyse problems such as effective use of selling time, route planning and call scheduling and also handling unusual selling problems.

Demonstration

The demonstration method of training is where sales managers plan and carry out a real selling call on a customer or prospect with the salesmen they are training present as silent observers. The method is most appropriately used for training new salesmen.

Role Playing

In this method first the trainer describes the situations and different personalities involved. Then the trainee is asked to play the role of those personalities in different situations. In the end both the trainer and trainee appraise each player's effectiveness and suggest how performance of each has been improved. Thus, role playing can be defined as "a method of human interaction which involves realistic behaviour in an imaginary situation". The merits of the role-playing method are: 1. Learning by doing is emphasised. 2. Human sensitivity and interactions are stressed. 3. The knowledge of results is immediate. 4. Trainee interest and involvement tend to be high. 5. Trainees learn to accept criticism from others and the group soon recognises that sound suggestions benefit everyone.

6 Role player's practice introspection through participating in the appraisal of their own performances. 7. Role playing provides chance to learn valuable tricks and gain acting experience.

Case Discussion (Learning by Doing)

The case is a set of data (real or fictional, written or oral). Miniature description and summary of such data presents issues and problems calling for solutions or action on the part of trainee. When the trainees are given cases to analyse, they are asked to identify the problem and to recommend tentative solutions through group discussions. ! Caution The salesman must be one who can be trusted, as he has to handle even money, besides merchandise. He must be prompt and on the job everyday. He must be one who can be relied on not only by you but also by his customers and his fellow employees.

Gaming Simulation

This method is somewhat similar to role playing with a unique feature that it uses highly structured and contrived situations based on reality and players receive information feedback.

Advantages

1. Participants learn easily because they involve themselves in game play. 2. Players develop skills in identifying key factors influencing decisions. 3. Games have built-in information feedback features.

Limitations

1. Some minimum amount of time is required for playing, usually, three to four hours, which is not sufficient to provide desired learning experience. 2. Since the game designs are based on ordinary decision making process their rules often prevent play on unusual or novel approaches. 3. Poorly designed games may actually hinder instead of helping.

On-the-Job Training (Coach-and-pupil Method)

In this the salesmen are coached and instructed by skilled co-workers or by supervisors or by the special training instructor. They learn the job by personal observation and practice as well as occasionally handling it. This method involves three steps. First, the coach who is an experienced sales person begins by describing particular selling situations, explaining various techniques and approaches. Next, accompanied by pupil, the coach makes actual sales call, discussing each with the trainee afterward. Then, under coach supervision trainee makes sales calls, each one being followed by discussion.

Programmed Learning (Teaching by Machine Method)

Programmed instruction involves a sequence of steps which are often set up through the central panel of an electronic computer as a guide in the performance of a desired operation or service of operation. It involves breaking down information into meaningful units and then arranging these in a proper way to form a logical and sequential learning programme or package for use with the machine. But programmed instructions have not been widely adopted for sales training due to their high cost of operation and other constraints.

Correspondence Courses

Companies with highly technical products and small but widely deployed sales forces use correspondence courses to acquaint experienced sales people with new product development and applications. It is most appropriate as an interim training method when trainees are scattered geographically but are assembled periodically for lectures, seminars, role playing and other instructions. 8.5 Execution of Sales Training

Execution is the fourth step of the A-C-M-E-E approach of sales training. It involves the following four key decisions: 1. Who will be the trainees? 2. Who will be the trainers? 3. When will the training take place? 4. Where will the training site be?

Who Will be the Trainees?

The general criteria to identify trainees are: 1. Reward for good performance. 2. Punishment for poor performance. 3. Convenience of trainee and trainer. 4. Seniority: The greater the seniority, the greater opportunity for added training.

MOTIVATING METHODES

Financial Motivational Techniques

Most salesmen prefer the financial benefit because the need at the lower level of organisation is more of physiological and safety needs, rather than those of esteem and self actualisation. Social needs are also necessary at all levels. The financial incentives include: 1. Higher salary 2. More commission 3. Other monetary incentives 4. Profit sharing

5. Travelling allowance 6. Bonus, etc. The financial incentives become less affective after some time and thereafter the salesman is looking to non-financial incentives which have been discussed at length. ! Caution People with high need levels are self-starters. They require certain external incentives to succeed on their jobs and constantly challenge themselves to improve their own performances. Such people do not require motivation by the management other than that of providing the right kind of job environment.

Non-financial Motivational Technique

The simple motivational tools of early years such as only financial benefits prove to be a poor method of motivation beyond physiological and safety needs satisfaction on account of the unique aspects of a sales person's job. The non-financial incentives, thus, become an important component of the motivation mix of a company. These are specially relevant as Dawson has pointed, "Business is on the threshold of a new era of human and social concern, which will inevitably result in greater attention to total human resource development by sales management". Some of the unconventional factors that make a special rank on sales force motivation are discussed below.

Meeting between Manager and Sales Force

These are highly regarded by sales managers in the motivation of their sales teams as this provides opportunity to managers to meet their sales force in the field, at head office and at the sales meetings/conventions. These meetings allow the sales manager to understand the personality, needs and problems of each sales person. The manager can then better understand the causes of demotion/frustration in individual sales person and respond in a manner which takes into account the needs, problems and personality of the sales person. Sales techniques can thus be improved and confidence boosted. According to Likert, when the sales manager encourages an "open" style of management, salesmen are encouraged to discuss their problems and opportunities so that the entire sales team benefits from the experience of each salesman. This results in a greater sense of group loyalty and improved performance. The success of the marketing team can be easily attributed to the open door policy adopted by companies in India. As one manager put it, "I know all my team of 166 sales representatives personally, by name and make it a point to keep in touch with all of them. They can walk in any time with their problems and they have got the confidence that most of their problems will be handled to their satisfaction".

Clarity of Job

Clarity of job and what is expected from the sales person is a great motivator. The objectives when duly quantified and well defined, properly connected and linked with the reward and recognition serve as a source of motivation to the sales person.

Sales Targets or Quotas

If a sales target or quota is to be effective in motivating a sales person, it must be regarded as fair and attainable and yet offer a challenge to him. Because the sales person should regard the quota as fair, it is usually sensible to allow him to participate in the setting of the quota. However, the establishment of the quotas is ultimately the sales manager's responsibility and he will inevitably be constrained by overall company objectives. If sales are planned to increase by 10 per cent, then salesmen's quotas must be altered in a manner consistent with this objective. Variations around this average figure will arise through the sales managers knowledge of individual sales person and changes in commercial activity within each territory; for e.g., the liquidation of a key customer in a territory may be reflected in a reduced quota. Quotas can be set on rupee sales, unit volume, margin, selling effort or activity and product type. The attainment of a sales target or quota usually results in some form of financial benefit to the sales person.

Sales Contest

The sales contest is an important tool to motivate sales persons. The purpose of sales contest varies widely. It may encourage a high level of sales in general to increase the sales of a slowmoving product or to reward the generation of new customers. It provides an incentive to show better performance and secure more satisfactory results. However, sales contest has a few disadvantages. One such disadvantage is that it can encourage cheating. For e.g., in one company which used a sales contest to promote sales at a series of promotional events around the country with its dealers, sales persons "stored up" orders achieved prior to the event in order to increase the apparent number of orders taken at the event. Also, contests, by pitching sales person against sales person, militate against the spirit of mutual help and cooperation which can improve sales force performance.

Sales Conventions and Conferences

These are the devices of group motivation. They provide opportunities for sales persons to participate, gain social satisfaction and express their views on matters directly affecting their work. They promote team work, dissolve social barriers, inspire and raise sales person's morale. Most of the companies in India are now a days adopting this method to motivate their sales force.

Positive Effect

The positive effect method is also an important technique for motivating the salesforce to their best. The proper application of praise, positive feedback, and human warmth and understanding can impel others to perform up to their capabilities. This must be done in a genuine way and not be perceived as overtly self serving. Another form of motivation through positive effect occurs via a small group and peer relations. Friendship, support and comradeship frequently serve as vehicles for creating positive feelings towards company and job.