

Prestigious Sales Executive Council Lavishes Accolades on Sales Academy Instituted by New Zealand's Gen-i Telecom Integrator

COMPANY: Gen-i

Industry:
Telecommunications

Strategy:
Establish a comprehensive sales academy to provide hundreds of sales professionals with needed development.

Results:
Recognized by the prestigious Sales Executive Council. Nearly 35% improvement in salespeoples' "outstanding" ratings.

The telecommunications industry runs fast, with every provider and integrator driven to outpace its competition. The competitive edge often hinges on the ability to provide both more innovative technology and, perhaps most important, superior sales.

The provider's success at presenting its technological solution to help customers meet their communications needs hinges on technical expertise, selling acumen and relationship-building skills.

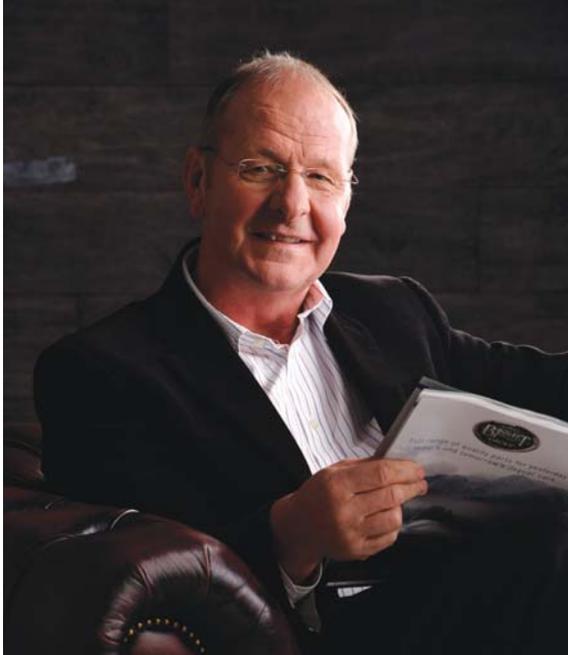
A case in point is Gen-i, a leading integrator of IT and telecommunications services providing information and communications technology (ICT) solutions for clients across New Zealand and Australia. The company was formed in 2004 with the joining of Telecom Advanced Solutions, Gen-i and Computerland. Today, the company has 3,500 employees across 17 locations, revenues in excess of \$1.6 billion and a client list that spans 3,300 public and private sector organizations.

Challenges presented by the merger, compounded by competitive pressures, placed Gen-i in a position many organizations find themselves today – the necessity of becoming more aggressive in their business development -- or risk the alternative.

To help it strengthen its reputation as a leading ICT services company, Gen-i engaged AchieveGlobal, international performance improvement company, to help it transform itself into a more effective, professional selling organization.

“Our business environment was changing dramatically from a classic telecommunications company to an ITC services provider and we needed to ensure that the capability of our people would take us into the new





John Woodyard
Manager of Gen-i's Sales Academy

world,” said John Woodyard, manager of Gen-i's Sales Academy, a discipline established to promote world-class sales development within the organization.

“The failure to grow our sales peoples' skills would place our business at risk,” he added.

To understand the organization's then-current sales skills capabilities – and then set a goal for improvement – Gen-i's key leadership commissioned a project team to establish a baseline and then identify the sales development needs required to strengthen and ensure its industry leadership position. The Sales Academy emerged as a result, and a “Chancellor,” the company CEO Chris Quin, named to champion it.

Next, the company let an RFP to solicit prospective sales and leadership development providers. “We felt that the AchieveGlobal materials was superior, the coaching programs supporting the programs excellent, the courses mapped nicely, and they promoted a common language for all of us to better communicate internally and externally about our new skills,” Woodyard said. For these reasons, Gen-i decided to partner with AchieveGlobal, and Woodyard engaged AchieveGlobal's Martin Percival, Managing Director to see the initiative through.

Sales Academy launched soon after, with 40 sales managers and 300 sales people participating. Designed to provide both skills development and

behavior change, these programs included AchieveGlobal's *Professional Selling Skills*, *Professional Sales Coaching*, *Selling in a Competitive World*, *Professional Teleselling Skills*, *Professional Sales Negotiations*, *Accelerating Team Productivity* and *Stellar Service*.

“These programs delivered the knowledge, the skills and the motivation to put this learning into action across the key improvement areas we identified – solution selling, business acumen, industry and customer knowledge and team leadership,” Woodyard said. “As a result, we've experienced a dramatic improvement in our sales people's performance across a number of core competencies, with a nearly 35 percent improvement in “outstanding” ratings.”

The Academy's success has been so profound that the prestigious Sales Executive Council, headquartered in Rosslyn, Virginia, having assessed hundreds of sales programs, called Gen-i's sales initiative “one of the most effective we have seen.”

The council has identified five components of a world-class sales development program, “all of which the Sales Academy highly meets or exceeds,” the council noted. It cited Gen-i's success at aligning its strategy and goals, enhancing role-specific skills, reinforcing skills long-term, measuring developmental progress and holding progress accountable to business outcomes.

In fact, Gen-i's Sales Academy has been so successful that the company is using it as a springboard to career advancement, specifically, Woodyard noted, as a link to traditional university studies.

“Successful Sales Academy graduates can then ‘cross-credit’ towards a post graduate certification in management studies, specializing in sales management, which in turn contributes 25% of the requirements for an MBA,” he said. “This provides a strong incentive for our sales people to grow their skills and legitimize sales as a profession.”



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