



Building an Exceptional Sales Culture on World Class Strengths





Sales Success Stories

“Building an Exceptional Sales Culture on World Class Strengths” is one in the Sales Success Stories Series published by Fusion Learning to share and celebrate the success stories of our clients.

The cases in the series are based on Fusion Learning's international sales performance solutions.

We thank our Clients for assisting us in developing these success stories.

In Brief:

A strong corporate culture is an incalculable asset, a powerful binding force that tells people what to value and how to act, no matter what situations they find themselves in. A strong corporate culture can also be a roadblock to change if change is presented the wrong way.

Molson, Canada's oldest brewer, had a sales culture over 220 years deep. Molson representatives courted bar owners, hoteliers and restauranteurs – about 25% of the national market – with a mix of friendship, fair dealing and personal style. But the rise of data-driven national chains has raised the stakes on every sales call to playoff levels, with as much as one per cent of national consumption riding on a single presentation. Could the Molson team be ready to target with the necessary precision, while still playing with the flair and fun that beer represents? Snap the cap on this tale to read how they did it.

With Fusion Learning's help, Molson has turned their existing culture into a foundation and springboard rather than a roadblock.

Building an Exceptional Sales Culture on World Class Strengths.

Beer, one of humanity's consistently favourite drinks, is a drink to pleasure.

Beer is for celebrations, a reward for hard work well done or a game well played. The beer market, however, is something else.

"We sell simple products," says Roy Hryn, Vice President for North American Key Accounts, "but that doesn't mean they're easy to sell."

Changes in the market have made sales a more difficult, more high-stakes game. "The pie isn't growing," says Rick Tousaw, Area Vice President for Ontario, "and fighting for a bigger piece of it is driving trade costs up. Some people are reacting by just spending more, but we're saying that if we're going to spend more, we want to invest in areas that will drive consumers to our business, in the tie-breakers that will help the consumer make the right choice more readily."

One of Molson's investments, training with Fusion Learning, is helping customers to make the right choices in a market that is arguably changing faster than at any time in more than 220 years of company history.

Since 1786, Molson has had a history of making the right choices itself, successfully associating itself with the national game, as well as other sports that conjure images of vigorous achievement. In 2005, Molson solidified its continental position with a merger with the prestigious US brewer, Adolph Coors, to become Molson Coors Brewing Company.

This merger was just one of many global mergers and acquisitions, as brewers sought synergies across borders and oceans with more efficient ways of serving drinkers' enthusiasm for beers from other countries. This new enthusiasm for premium imported brands is one of the few bright spots in the business. Although beer consumption had enjoyed an exciting period of growth through the

latter half of the 20th century, changed attitudes and demographics had by the last decade shifted the beer business almost to a zero-sum game. Moreover, changes in the hospitality landscape had increased the stakes dramatically.

The Changed Landscape

The Canadian beverage alcohol market is unique in the world. Under pressure from temperance forces in the early part of the 20th century, the United States and Canada went their separate ways. The Americans adopted Prohibition; Canada created complex regulatory regimes. When Prohibition was shown to be unworkable, it was abolished; the regulatory regimes, however, remain.

In Ontario, Canada's largest market, beer reaches consumers through three principal channels. Brewers sell their product directly to the consumer through The Beer Store, an enterprise collectively owned by the brewers, and through the provincial agency, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO). They sell indirectly, in what the industry calls on-premise sales, through hotels, restaurants and bars. Sales through the LCBO have become more important in recent years as the agency targeted the beer category as a key growth platform, allotting increased shelf space, increased number of brands and permitted more in-store marketing, but the big change in sales has been the rise of National Accounts. On-premise sales are still, overall, a highly fragmented market that has to be addressed in detail, but the National Accounts are a world unto themselves, of strategic importance given their impact on sales. One chain of sports bars, for instance, sells more than one per cent of all the beer consumed in Canada.

Selling to a National Account this large is very different from selling to one location or even a small chain. "A single entrepreneur hasn't much use for information from us," Roy Hryn notes,

“We sell simple products but that doesn't mean they're easy to sell.”
Roy Hryn, Vice President - North American Key Accounts

“If our people can uncover a customer’s needs, they can turn those needs into a very powerful selling story. Fusion Learning is very good at provoking people to understand that process.”

Roy Hryn, Vice President - North American Key Accounts

situation – we worked on this with the Fusion Learning group – we sent a letter asking, ‘Where are you going?’ and ‘How can we help you get there?’ That really

“but a large restaurant chain may do as much business as we do, so they need the same type of information to make a decision.”

Although the National Account sales teams were willing to share information, it wasn’t clear that information was getting to customers in a way they could appreciate. A lot of selling is telling a story, says Roy Hryn, but customers weren’t always getting the right story, or they were getting a story that was so over-elaborated that they couldn’t make use of it. “It was always an overload,” he says.

The company already had a selling process called M.O.L.S.O.N. to help people focus information on the customer, but it needed more depth. A Molson team examined several proposals. “I realized after the fact,” remembers Jeff Armstrong, Director of Sales Training, “that the processes, skills and behaviours that Fusion Learning applied to us were exactly the skills they later helped embed in our organization. They asked thoughtful questions to help us shape where exactly we wanted to go as a sales culture. They walked the walk.”

The National Account group was the first to receive Fusion Learning training to sharpen their ability to dig into the customer’s needs and then communicate the value of the Molson brand in terms of those needs. One of the key tools they learned is the Thoughtful Question – one that invites the customer to step outside the traditional sales/customer role and share an understanding of the needs that are really important.

“The value of probing for a solution rather than jumping in and making a presentation,” says Shane Chambers, Sales Manager for National Accounts, “really stood out for me. A customer will often have a solution or at least a direction in his mind. If you can get there, it makes your job a lot easier.”

Recently, Shane Chambers and his team held an initial meeting with a long-term account whose top leadership had just gone through a wholesale change. “Before,” he says, “we would have gone in and told them, ‘This is what we do.’ In this

set the tone for a good meeting. Intelligent people appreciate it when you come in and listen to them, rather than come in and download on them.”

Terry Rudiak, also a Sales Manager for National Accounts, describes a similar meeting with the National Account responsible for one per cent of all beer sold in Canada. The account has a strong history – it reaches back to the founders’ original location – but there were simmering problems. The Account Team took their Fusion Learnings to heart and, to understand the issues more clearly, visited franchisees across the country, asking Thoughtful Questions and videotaping the answers. What they discovered enabled them to negotiate with knowledge and thus, strength. “We wouldn’t have missed all the issues we discovered,” says Terry Rudiak, “but we never would have understood and responded to all the regional and franchise stuff. That was amazing.”

That experience has changed the way he deals with customers. “I’m asking more questions now. Not like, ‘Why do you need that [competitor] tap?’ but ‘How does that [competitor] tap affect your business?’ I’m not going to show them the data we have, because they won’t believe me, but if I ask the right questions, they’ll find the answers I want.”

“The key to manage the change to The Molson Way is at the sales manager level. When you see the light come on for someone who has been with the company for 20 years as well as for someone who just came from outside Molson, you understand you’ve got traction, so we’re in a good place right now.”

Rick Tousaw, Area Vice President - Ontario

Roy Hryn witnessed another presentation put together by three managers who used a Fusion Learning example as their template. "It was a really good thought-starter and catalyst," he remembers, "a good precursor to telling the story. It wasn't the defining piece, but it separated us from the competition and we ended up with the business."

Success at the National Account Level led naturally to adoption of the Fusion Learning programs for the field representatives, who service local and regional accounts as well as local LCBO outlets. In addition to the issues tackled at the National Account level, Fusion Learning's work had to address the lack of consistency across the province.

"We used to have a culture that was almost wholly reflective of the personality of the local sales manager," says Rick Tousaw. "They all had their unique approaches, and when we tried to cross-develop someone by moving them from Ottawa to London, it was like they'd moved to Mars."

That was beer culture *then*. Today, he says, it's time to see beer as a packaged good that should be sold with the same process and discipline as any other top tier packaged good organization and the *Molson Way to Manage* is the key to instilling consistency and discipline into sales. "Fusion Learning has played a valuable role in pulling the organization along and learning best practices, while avoiding the pitfalls that other companies have fallen into." This is more necessary because field representatives have taken on the LCBO responsibility, where managers are just as process- and information-driven as their counterparts in a large grocery chain.

But being process-driven doesn't mean that the representatives have to surrender their individuality. "We really appreciated the Fusion Learning work," says Sudbury Sales Manager Clayton Bertrand, "first because it was "beer-ready" for us – it built on things we were doing already – and second because it

lets the guys keep their own creativity and style – 'here's the frame, you paint the picture.' People learned to think through the approach before they went in – how to make the call and what they want to achieve by the time they leave. It's a process, but when they're with the customer, that process is transparent. What the customer sees is that we're getting better at what we do for them– probing and asking better questions, negotiating better. It's done wonders for our selling skills."

The Thoughtful Question is as useful a tool locally as it is in National Accounts. Jeff Armstrong recounts a recent in-market coaching call with a rep: "During the call she asked the customer, 'What can [this competitor] do for you that I can't?'" The customer paused for a very long moment and then there was an outpouring from him. That question made him stop and think about what was important to him. Our person got back in there, did the work and showed commitment. In 2 months, we had all the business back. After, I asked her where that question came from and she said, 'I got it 2 days before in the Fusion Learning session on understanding customer needs.'"

The in-market coaching, described by Rick Tousaw as "the main takeaway here", also is a hit with Clayton Bertrand. Clayton has significantly enhanced his in-market coaching time by accompanying his representatives on their calls and supporting them with predetermined coaching goals, "my folks know what I'm looking for and that creates a really good learning atmosphere for both of us."

Speaking to a group of executives about the Fusion Learning experience and its results, Rick Tousaw said, "Right now the results are more qualitative than quantitative. Our research tells us that world-class sales organizations had one thing in common – they have a clear sales process design and they systematically manage against that process. We had done a nice job of shaping a sales process, but we had not systematized our management process. The Way To Manage is just that, a systematic way

“We needed to embed a consistent Molson Way into the company. Fusion Learning respected our culture, they respected the processes that we had established and they helped us deepen them.”

Rick Tousaw, Area Vice President - Ontario

to manage against the process. It's early days for that, but our work with Fusion Learning is really starting to nail that consistency. The *Molson Way To Manage* is our biggest opportunity."

"There are some numbers we can talk about. First, we have targets for promoting from within; now, we're not just matching them, we're exceeding them, so we are developing the skills and

competencies for future leaders and we're setting people up for success. That's an exciting thing to measure. Second, the Ontario market has been very challenging in past years, but our dozen strategic brands grew at three times industry growth. That's a key indicator for the success of our work with Fusion Learning."



Fusion Learning

Who We Are

Fusion Learning is one of Canada's leading full service sales performance firms, with an international reputation for enabling Clients to shape sales culture and deliver targeted results. We provide the expertise of over 20 professionals – facilitators, consultants, learning designers, writers, project leaders, graphics designers, and administrative support – who together develop and deliver solutions to your sales performance challenges.

We have an array of experiences to draw from, and our Shared Purpose guides our thoughts and actions.

Passionate Learning Leaders:

- Dedicated to excellence
- Recognized for our collaborative learning solutions
- Enabling Clients to shape sales culture and deliver targeted results

What We Do

Fusion Learning designs and delivers sales and service performance solutions. Either by leveraging our extensive library of proven core learning programs, or by developing a custom solution through an in-depth understanding of your unique needs.

Our capabilities include: leading edge core learning programs and processes, targeted selling skills, practical sales management, and facilitating sales strategy.

We customize our core programs and systems so they are culturally specific and resonate for your organization.

And we take great pride in causing lasting change.

How We Can Help

We believe we can help you address many of your sales and service performance needs.

Whether it's crystallizing sales strategy for the organization, developing targeted capabilities for customer-facing professionals, sales management development, or a combination of initiatives.

Whether you're looking for a one day session, or an integrated, multi-phased curriculum driven by your organization's strategic direction.

As a full service sales performance and implementation organization, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to understand your needs, to explore how we can best enable and embed sales performance in your organization, and to earn your business.

“A Powerful Change Vehicle”

A one-minute guide to Fusion Learning’s High Performance Sales Culture

Fusion Learning has completed a comprehensive Survey of Sales and Human Resource Executives to study High Performance Sales Cultures. That research uncovered five challenges that Sales organizations face today. This model has emerged from our research. The High Performance Sales Culture Model illustrates the interconnection between each of the key elements, forming a sales system for success.



Let’s highlight some key findings that led to the model:

Client/Customer:

The long term viability of any sales organization depends upon its ability to identify and satisfy the high priority needs of its Clients/Customers - to forge a connection that has two way communication and respect.

Sales Strategy:

In order for a sales organization to get where it wants to be, it must first have a clearly articulated Sales Strategy of where it wants to go. When asked, “Does each member of the sales force use the sales strategy to guide daily actions, and make operational decisions?”, the average response was 5 out of 10.

Sales Management:

Sales Management appears to be the highest point of leverage in a High Performance Sales Culture! Sales Meetings, for example, are held monthly or less frequently in 55% of companies surveyed and their productivity is rated as 6 out of 10. Sales Pipeline/Funnel – only 33% of organizations have

an easy to follow process and when asked about the pipeline driving sales productivity, the average response was 4.7 out of 10. Feedback from Sales Managers to Salespeople - 44% of organizations do not have a model for providing feedback.

Sales Capabilities:

When asked “if each member of the sales force is highly effective in the communication skills needed to secure sales and build strong Client relationships ” - the average response was a disappointing 5.8 out of 10, with 40% of organizations rating it as 5 out of 10 or less!

Performance Measurement Systems and Accountability:

A critical component of a high performance sales culture that many organizations have in place, but do not effectively support.

Fusion Learning specializes in enabling Clients to create and sustain High Performance Sales Cultures, customizing solutions based on unique Client needs in any and all aspects of the Model.



If you would like information about any of Fusion Learning's programs and capabilities, please contact:

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