

Baxter Healthcare prescribes Self-Management Group training for cultural change

As vice-president of sales training and development for Baxter Healthcare Corporation, the principal U.S. operating subsidiary of Baxter International Inc., a global healthcare company with its head office in Deerfield, IL, Lou Rofrano gets people calling him just about every day with the hope and intention of convincing him to buy various sales and management training programs.

A busy, no-nonsense sales executive with decades of managerial experience, Rofrano is rarely impressed with the pitches he hears.

However, from the first time he spoke to Rob McHardy, of the Self-Management Group (SMG), Rofrano knew he was dealing with someone who approached training very differently from the herd of sales trainers he was so used to shooing away. And, he knew he wanted to hear more.

Keenly aware that he wanted to see some significant changes in the approach Baxter was taking in the area of sales force performance management, Rofrano immediately sat up when he heard McHardy begin to talk about the notion of self-management being the number-one competency of all successful people. McHardy went on to explain how SMG's training is based on the principle that effort, while one of the most critical factors in determining the outcome of an individual's performance, can really only be managed by the individual, rather than by their manager, coach or trainer.

As the discussion progressed to the specific elements of SMG's targeted self-management training and coaching programs, Rofrano quickly became convinced that he wanted to implement a test program with several of his

key sales managers to help them become more effective at coaching their representatives to perform at a higher level.

Managing Effort: Getting Results

Partnering with Baxter's director of human resources, Rofrano gave the green light to a hand-picked team of sales managers to participate in SMG's *Managing Effort: Getting Results* coaching and management system, a practical program designed to help coaches and managers improve performance and results through training, coaching and facilitating the development of their people as self-managers.

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"I saw the Managing Effort program as an opportunity to shift the cultural emphasis within our organization to one focused on execution, accountability and on driving talent forward," said Rofrano.

Very shortly after bringing SMG in to deliver the Managing Effort training on a trial basis, Rofrano began receiving feedback from the managers participating in the program that it was the most useful and relevant management training they had ever received. What his managers told him was that the practical roadmap they were being given to develop responsible, self-managing individual performers made clear, unequivocal sense to them, and they found it easy to begin implementing immediately.

Coaching, not coaxing

Like at many other organizations that have followed SMG's training programs, Baxter's sales managers reported that they felt freed up to devote more time to coaching their best-effort employees to be even better performers, rather than wasting their energy repeatedly coaxing non-effort people to keep their commitments and do what they are getting paid to do.

"So many training programs focus on building an individual's skill and knowledge to perform better in their job, with virtually no attention paid to the commitment they have to actually do the job. That's where SMG's training is so drastically different," said Rofrano. "It gives managers the confidence they need to manage their people from a practical perspective, and it's simple."

Buoyed by the enthusiasm of his test group of sales managers in applying the strategies and processes they learned to gain commitment and a higher level of accountability from their people, Rofrano knew it was time to introduce Bob McHardy to Baxter's senior executive management team.

After explaining to the executive team how the principles of self-management factor so predominantly in SMG's unique training approach, Rofrano and SMG were given the go-ahead to enlist the rest of the company's regional sales managers in the Managing Effort program, along with anyone in the sales organization who was being considered for a promotion to a manager's position.

Talent review process

Within one year, all of Baxter's regional sales managers across the U.S. had successfully gone through the Managing Effort program. Since then, the program has been overlaid on the company's formal talent review process in order to help identify individuals who have the self-management make-up to be promoted into higher level positions throughout the company.

As the philosophy of self-management continues to become more deeply ingrained in the culture of the Baxter organization, Rofrano said the company will introduce the SMG training program to managers in an increasing number of functional areas beyond the sales organization.

"Anyone who has the responsibility for managing a specific, measurable result from the employees who report to them can benefit from this program," he said.

Offering that the introduction of the SMG Managing Effort training program at Baxter ignited one of the most rapid changes in organizational culture he has seen anywhere, Rofrano said the key to the program's success was its simplicity and the fact that it was not disruptive to the company's existing talent management system.

"The self-management training isn't just mind food," said Rofrano. "It's a very real and practical roadmap to help our organization's managers have more meaningful conversations with their people about their performance. It also gives us a better ability to identify and promote the right people and it gives our people the tools to be more honest with themselves about their performance, which benefits everyone."