

Hire Smart, Develop Selling Skills and Manage for Individual and Team Success

Meadowbrook Golf is a leader in golf course management, maintenance and supplies in the United States. Today the organization is comprised of four companies that meet the demands of the market: Meadowbrook Golf provides the management, International Golf Maintenance provides the maintenance and Golf Ventures East and West are the golf supply arm of the business.

Hire Smart

In 2003, Ron Jackson, the CEO of Meadowbrook, was excited about the future growth of the company. The turf business is a highly specialized, tight knit industry. Their strong reputation was built on their expertise in providing superior products and services to golf courses and municipalities. Ron knew the only way he could take the company to the next level was to not only find the right people with the specific experience they needed but to also find a way to keep them happy and motivated so they would stay.

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*Mike Eastwood,
President of GVW*

Ron learned of the behavioral assessment tool Predictive Index (PI) and brought it into Meadowbrook as a way to help the managers understand what motivated their employees to come to work everyday. By obtaining this insight, Meadowbrook was able to keep their talent by “managing them for their individual success.” Meadowbrook also realized that their top performers possessed very similar behavioral characteristics as identified through their PI results. Using this information, Meadowbrook was now able to “Hire Smart” by incorporating this information into their hiring process.

Golf Ventures West (GVW), the supply division of Meadowbrook in western U.S., offers equipment that ranges from a string trimmer to a \$70,000 rotary motor, along with fertilizer, seed and specialty products. Mike Eastwood, President of GVW, had been using PI for hiring and managing his sales force with great success. According to Mike, it all starts with PI, “Any company who is not using PI is selling themselves short. Without using PI in the hiring process, how do you really know what you are getting? And as a next step, if you do not know your people, how do you manage them?”

Sales Development

Mike had the best talent in the industry, long-time clients and very low turnover. While it all seemed idealistic, Mike had a problem. He needed his team to sell more. The challenge was how to identify what they needed in sales training to help them grow their sales. In sharing his concerns with Ron, he learned that the publishers of the Predictive Index, PI Worldwide, now offered a Selling Skills Assessment Tool (SSAT) that identified individual and group selling skills as well as sales training (Customer-Focused Selling (CFS)) that focused on the selling needs of the team. Mike decided to explore the SSAT further so he and his senior management team took the assessment. They understood the value of this tool after they saw their results, which identified their strengths and areas for development. Mike’s results

accurately identified his selling style. His GM's, most with over 30 years in the industry, scored in the mid to high range. Next, the sales team was given the SSAT, where the overall scores were in the mid to low range. Mike quickly realized that despite the talent of his sales team, 80% did not know how to sell!

The results of the SSAT showed that the majority of the sales people at Golf Ventures West were not asking enough investigative questions when speaking with their clients. This was a huge breakthrough. Mike explains, "The SSAT is one of the greatest sales tools you can have if you are a sales manager, VP of Sales or a GM. It identifies a person's basic selling skills and the specific areas for improvement."

Using the information from the SSAT, Mike and his team participated in the Customer-Focused Selling training. In this workshop they learned the 5 steps in consultative selling, focusing most of their energies on developing their investigative selling skills. This class opened everyone's eyes to the sales process from the customer's perspective.

The Results

The skills Mike's team learned were implemented right away. "I suspected the Customer-Focused Sales Workshop would pay for itself quickly, and it did in less than two weeks. My most senior and successful salesperson (SSAT 52%) followed the CFS process and closed a \$40,000 deal with a customer that had only purchased from our competitor for the last ten years. He enjoyed the way the selling process peeled back the customer's reservations and opened the door for the sale. This sales person has continued to significantly increase his revenue over the previous year."

In another instance, Mike had a sales person who was under-performing but knew he had the potential to be successful. This salesperson went through CFS training and was moved to a new territory. The results were amazing. This salesperson sold more in 4 months in his new territory than in a year in his original area. When Mike asked what enabled him to turn his performance around, the sales person responded, "I have been using the tools from the CFS class in my new territory and they have helped me 'BIG TIME.' The biggest tip I received from the class was to ask broader questions up front to help determine the needs of the customer."

The success that Meadowbrook Golf and Golf Ventures West have enjoyed all comes down to their people. Their recipe for success? Predictive Index to hire smart and to manage their people for top performance, and SSAT and CFS to identify and develop selling skills.