Chapter 9
Sales Improvement Initiative Reveals Need for Performance Improvement Interventions

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter posits the use of Thomas Gilbert's Behavior Engineering Model to improve human performance in the workplace. The author suggests that it is critical to apply a holistic approach when approaching any human performance improvement initiatives. Sales within an organization is a human performance issue and recurring sales performance problems should be addressed by delving to the root of the human performance issues at hand. It is critical to consider not just the repertoire of human behavior, but also examine the supporting environment, to ensure it provides the necessary impetus to improving performance.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Cornucopia Learning Systems LLC (CLS) is a training solutions company focused on providing soft skills and HR training solutions to clients in the United States and Canada (USC) region. CLS is an independent organization that supports local as well as multinational clients by providing 360 VR-based eLearning solutions and workshops to solve their various HR and soft skills training needs. CLS employs independent contractors to film and edit video scenarios, while they have an in-house team that designs and develops the training curricula.

CLS, in the 30 years of its existence, has always been at the cutting edge of technology. The company was started by two brothers, Ron and Sam Rittenour, as a result of their mother being harassed at work. Ron had a degree in media studies and Sam had a degree in law. They wanted to provide appropriate training to employees to recognize and respond to harassment. They began by putting together half-day workshops and inviting HR specialists to speak to the participants. They were one of the first companies to incorporate videos in their training and adopt computer-based formats to make their training widely available. CLS strives at providing a range of budget-friendly solutions to mom-and-pop organizations as well as custom, high-end solutions to big conglomerates.

The company headquarters are in Richmond, Virginia. What started as a family business, now employs 569 employees in several departments including human resources, course creation, marketing, sales, accounting, contracts, product stewardship, and fulfillment. A director governs each department with managers serving as direct reports. Each manager is responsible for a team leader and several team members. The sales team is the largest, with 115 employees in the United States and 46 in Canada. Throughout its existence, there has been a good amount of nepotism demonstrated in the company. The founders employed friends and relatives in senior positions and that trend has continued. There have been external hires as well, primarily because some directors and HR folks saw the need to bring in fresh talent and new ideas. But this has led to two camps with different emphases – the old timers looking to keep doing things the old ways and the newcomers wanting to infuse new ideas. This constant conflict has, over the past few years, severely limited the company's ability to mature and grow.

Senior leadership had been urging this division, primarily using it to generate some competition. But now, with sales dropping steadily over the past few years, the camps are quick to blame one another, and senior leadership has been forced to acknowledge that something has to change. In a meeting with the key company

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