



## Business Improvisation – Performance Under Pressure

### The Challenge

A group of 25 Sales and Marketing leaders want to ensure that they are at their best in front of clients, speaking opportunities and industry events. They are of diverse background, some coming from sales, product marketing and industry analysts. Poor handling of objections during the sales process, questions during presentations and thinking quickly under pressure have been issues that their traditional Sales Training has not been able to address effectively. The client also felt that the team would benefit from team building in the process enabling them to get to know each other better while having fun.

### The Client

ASCI was appointed by the VP of Sales and Marketing of an Electronic Goods manufacturer to work with her team. The team consisted of Regional and District Sales leaders, Marketing Directors and several Corporate Account Executives. Behavioral analysis (TAIS) of the team revealed that the dominant attentional style was Analytical/Conceptual combined with a very high need for Control and a very low propensity to risk.

### Objectives

The VP of Sales and Marketing wanted:

1. To be able to handle challenges and adversity in real time with confident and creative responses.
2. Increase sales and industry presence.

### Strategies

ASCI created a Business Improvisation Program that included:

- 1 day intensive workshop that explored style and performance under pressure preferences of the team that leveraged:
  - TAIS
  - Improvisation Exercises adapted to business scenarios
  - Live Performance Scenarios

### Process

1. Each individual on the team self-administered TAIS online. TAIS (*The Attentional and Interpersonal Style inventory*) measures attentional preferences, interpersonal characteristics and performance under pressure. TAIS helps identify the types of situations and conditions under which highly effective individuals are more or less likely to perform up to their potential.

## Case Study

### Components

- TAIS
- Business Improvisation
- ASCI Sales Training

### Duration

- Discovery 1 Day
- Pre-work 2 hours
- Workshop 1 Day

### Target

- Sales and Marketing Teams
- Leadership Teams
- Customer Service Teams
- 5 to 50 Participants

### More Information

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2. As pre-work each individual received a one to one debrief of their TAIS results and was coached on behavior issues regarding their performance under pressure, improvisation, and day to day issues they face as part of the Sales and Marketing Team.
3. The team was brought together for a full day workshop where they explored their behavioral preferences using TAIS and an ASCI facilitation that encouraged discussion and interaction. The workshop was conducted in a Comedy Club, which added to the unique ambience of the workshop.
4. The Performance Under Pressure aspect of the group was further explored using Improvisation Exercises adapted to business scenarios. The progression of exercises evolved to more complex scenes, team and single presentations and finally a complete improvised PowerPoint presentation.
5. The technical and theoretical facets of improvisation were explored throughout the session as well. Research from medical and fire fighting organizations as well as business scenarios taken from the discovery were replayed, analyzed and discussed. Concepts such as Status, Yes, Blocking and Mirroring were also explored in theory and by exercise.
6. The workshop concluded with a dinner for the participants where a Professional Improv Troupe performed. During the performance the improvisers invited members from the audience (the workshop participants) to join scenes on stage. Several exercises performed during the workshop were similar to ones on stage so the transition was easy. The performance was recorded and, along with clips from the workshop, sent to the participants as a reminder of the experience and way to practice exercises.

## The Value

The team realized the value of intervention. It helped them gain a better understanding of how behavioral preferences can obstruct their performance in critical situations. The company plans to integrate Business Improvisation into their Sales Training curriculum for all client-facing personnel. An Improvisation scenario from an actual sales presentation will be included in the Sales Training. Feedback indicated that participants felt more confident in pressure situations. Observations from the VP reinforce this feedback.

## Feedback

*"What a great day. I had blast and learned why I freeze up when I'm under stress. It gave me something to work with."*

*"TAIS and the one to one debrief was very interesting. The coaching really made me think about being flexible and not holding on too tightly to the strategy I create before sales calls."*

*"Seeing my co-workers on stage with those improvisers was great, a unique way to close off the workshop, and one that I will remember."*

*"We need to get our sales people trained on Improvisation. It's like an unfair advantage."*