



# CASE STUDY

“ABC” PHARMACEUTICAL  
COMPANY

# CASE STUDY: ACCELERATING SALES TEAM READ- INESS AND INCREASING SALES REVENUE

## HOW ABC PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY DEVELOPED SALES PEOPLE IN TWO-THIRDS LESS TIME

Note: ABC is a pseudonym. Actual company name has been withheld at company's request.



### OBJECTIVE:

*To build the sales readiness to launch a new drug and quickly connect with customers for improved communications and increased sales.*

“ABC” Pharmaceutical Company is a leading player in the pharmaceutical industry. Headquartered in the United States, the company employs 43,000 people worldwide and markets its medicines in 146 countries.

In Australia the company operates a research and development function and employs over 200 sales representatives. ABC Pharmaceuticals’ worldwide commitment to excellence and the pursuit of innovation has been instrumental in the realization of many significant medical advances.

The impending launch of a new “wonder” drug led the company to revisit its approach to sales training. ABC’s typical process was to hire a number of graduates from universities each year to add to their sales force. Through the training and coaching that was in place, it would take, on average, two full years for graduates to achieve what ABC called “job mastery.” This meant they were on top of all the aspects of the job of a pharmaceutical sales rep and were selling to their maximum potential. But two years would be too long to wait for this drug introduction to be successful.

With large markets in both Australia and New Zealand, this new wonder drug represented a huge opportunity for the company. In order to fully capitalize on it, ABC would have to quickly add sales people and get them ramped up, not just on the product itself but also on how to effectively communicate and connect with their customers to demonstrate the drug's value.



## CHALLENGES:

*To accelerate the learning process in order to capitalize on the limited time available to establish a foothold in the market with a new drug.*

Within the pharmaceutical industry, companies typically only have about seven months after launching a new drug before competitors know “everything there is to know about it.” As a result, there is a very limited time window to make a mark with a new drug. Companies must market aggressively at the earliest stages of launch because the competition will launch “me-too” drugs within a fairly short period afterwards.

ABC's Australian/New Zealand sales manager had a very specific need: to double the sales force and get them trained to a level of job mastery in just 12 months. In tandem with this aggressive goal, ABC wanted to provide sales people the with learning, coaching and tools to be able to connect with their customers more effectively so they could, in turn, accelerate the sales process and increase overall revenues.



## SOLUTION:

*Using a thinking-based approach to develop an understanding of the mental demands of the job, optimize the learning and coaching experiences for each sales rep, and help sales reps better tailor their selling approaches to different buyers.*

Like most pharmaceutical companies, ABC invests heavily in training and, in particular, sales training. The National Training Manager had already experienced and implemented several of Herrmann International's Whole Brain® Thinking programs for his sales force at a previous company, and he believed a Whole Brain® solution would provide the right framework for achieving all of ABC's goals.

With the company's challenges, objectives and context in mind, Herrmann International Asia designed a learning solution to:

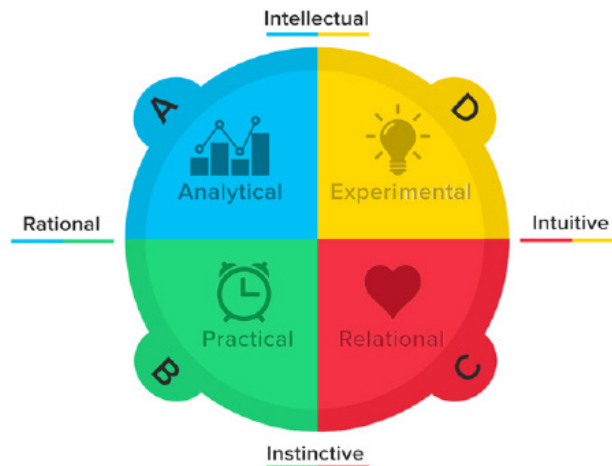
- Create awareness at both the sales manager/coach and individual sales representative level of the varied mental demands of the sales function within the pharmaceutical industry.
- Incorporate whole-brained learning experiences, tools and approaches that would have a greater level of impact for an audience of sales reps with varied thinking and learning preferences.
- Create awareness at the sales manager/coach level of the varied thinking

preferences of their sales reps so that they could tailor their coaching to the unique thinking and learning preferences of the individual rep.

- Provide sales reps with an understanding of varied thinking preferences of individuals in the sales process and tailor their communication styles in a way that would more likely resonate with varied individuals.

Herrmann International Asia worked with ABC actively over a three-year period. With a new CEO in place who was very supportive of learning as an organizational value and a corporate culture that was open to new methods and approaches to improve training effectiveness, the timing was perfect to introduce the Herrmann Whole Brain® methodology as a way to shorten the time to job mastery and give recent graduates the necessary tools and skills to be successful quickly out of the gate.

The Herrmann International team worked with the managing director, sales manager and training director to develop the learning program, using the Whole Brain® Model as a framework for teaching and learning.



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Called “Horizons,” this interpersonal skills program had four primary objectives:

1. Create an environment that supported and reinforced learning.
2. Provide support for the sales coaches to help them understand their own thinking preferences and understand how to tailor their coaching to reflect the unique thinking preferences and learning styles of their sales reps.
3. Provide support for the sale reps to help them understand the mental demands of their jobs and the implications of their unique thinking preferences on mastering those demands.
4. To assist the training manager in the development of learning experiences, tools and approaches that would reflect a more Whole Brain® approach, and therefore resonate with all sales reps, regardless of their preferences.

#### **Developing Sales Manager/Coaches and Mapping the Job**

Because the Horizon program would require the sales managers to perform on-going on-the job coaching, the program kicked off with a three-day interactive skills program designed to train the sales managers (approximately 12 people) to be

be effective coaches.

The company already had a strong coaching culture, as sales managers spent most of their time conducting joint calls with the reps. Typically, after three or four joint calls, the sales manager would have an opportunity, in the car or back in the office, to coach the sales rep on what he or she had observed in a real client call.

The new training was designed to help refine the managers' skills and give them new perspective on how to effectively coach sales reps, based on their own thinking preferences, the thinking preferences of the rep and the mental demands of the sales rep job itself. During the first morning of the coaches' training program, sales managers learned about their Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument® (HBDI®) Profiles, which define and describe someone's thinking preferences across the four quadrants of the Whole Brain® Model.

"After the managers had completed the coaching workshop," Michael Morgan, CEO of Herrmann International Asia, says, "they realized that they would need to adjust their coaching style based on the unique thinking preferences of the sales reps they would be coaching at any given opportunity."

In the afternoon, the managers explored the job of pharmaceutical sales rep, as well as the jobs of marketing support and marketing research. Using the Whole Brain® Model, they completed an exercise that answered the question, "What are the mental demands that being a pharmaceutical sales rep will place on the incumbent?" Afterwards, the group analyzed the role in terms of the four quadrants of the Model and developed a map that demonstrated those demands, sorted by each distinct quadrant of the brain.

From there, the group took the total job and broke it out into what the sales reps needed to learn in the first three, six, nine and then mastery at 12 months. Each job ended up with four job maps at three, six, nine and 12 months.



### **Developing Sales Reps' Job Mastery**

The second program was conducted for the pharmaceutical sales reps or the graduate recruits.

The first morning was similar to the manager's program, with everyone receiving



their HBDI® Profiles and learning about how they prefer to think and, in particular, how they prefer to learn.

“There were lots of insights from that morning,” Michael says. “Many of the graduates said they wished they’d known this information while at university as it probably would have made their lives a lot easier in terms of how they learned.”

In the afternoon the sales reps received their job maps. These maps showed them clearly the journey they would be taking in the next three, six, nine and 12 months—what it was they had to learn in terms of time, but also in terms of the mental demands it would place on them. They then overlaid their individual HBDI® Profiles on the job maps, making the connection of some of the implications and challenges they would individually face over the coming year.

Armed with this knowledge, they were each then able to create an individual learning plan based on the formal structured learning and other learning resources that were available in the organization. This plan would plot their individual journey and would be based on each person’s unique HBDI® Profile.

### **Whole Brain® Teaching and Learning**

The third component was working with the National Training Manager to create learning experiences, tools and approaches for the sales reps using the Whole Brain® Thinking framework. Most of the existing training programs came from ABC’s parent company in the U.S. and weren’t necessarily whole-brained. The training manager went through each of his programs and tailored them so they would incorporate whole-brained activities and appeal to all four quadrants of the brain, thus resonating with the different thinking and learning preferences of the people he had in the room.

### **“Color Your Client”**

Speaking at ABC’s annual sales conference every year, Morgan reinforced the application of Whole Brain® Thinking in sales. He also delivered Whole Brain® Thinking workshops with a mix of new graduate hires and experienced sales personnel.

But, he says, “The biggest application that we did on an ongoing basis for all sales reps outside of the ‘job mastery’ program was called ‘Color Your Client.’”

As Morgan points out, pharmaceutical reps aren’t typically selling to the end user of the product; they’re selling to a “recommender”—the doctor. The actual sale or recommendation takes place when the doctor meets the patient, and the hope of the pharma sales rep is that the doctor will remember that their drug is the best.

“The other thing that makes selling for a pharmaceutical company more challenging is that you’re selling to a doctor who, in the Herrmann world, is typically more blue-quadrant oriented (rational, logical, data driven, technical), has a high level of knowledge and probably knows a lot more than the sales rep,” says Morgan.

In this initiative, the Whole Brain® Model was used to teach the sales reps to recognize that they will encounter a number of different people with different thinking preferences as part of a normal sales call.

The first person the rep will encounter is often the receptionist (“gatekeeper”), someone who likely has a high preference for green, B-quadrant thinking (process driven, organized, safekeeping). This person is usually in charge of ordering supplies, scheduling patients and keeping a waiting room organized for a doctor who is likely to be running an hour or so behind on his appointments on any given day.

Receptionists are often extremely busy, and the last thing they want to deal with is a sales rep showing up for a sales call. If the sales rep doesn’t have a B-quadrant orientation as well, the issue is how to communicate effectively, befriend and develop a positive ongoing relationship with that person behind the front desk.

This program provided an opportunity for sales reps to discuss these issues and develop strategies to communicate more effectively with the gatekeepers.

The second person reps are likely to encounter on a sales call is the nurse, who is generally very different from the gatekeeper.

The sales reps then explored how to effectively communicate and relate to this individual, who is likely to have a high red or C-quadrant preference

discussed strategies for interacting with this person and adapting their own approaches, if necessary, to be able to build more effective relationships.

Finally, there is the doctor, who again, is likely to have a strong blue or A-quadrant preference. Appealing to this type of thinker requires being sharp, succinct and able to quickly provide the facts on the new product.

These were real issues that even the veteran sales reps faced on a regular basis, so most of the ongoing work involved providing them with strategies to effectively deal with and communicate with these varied individuals, all of whom were likely participants in the sales process.

## RESULTS:

*Original objectives not only achieved but surpassed, with a reduction in time to job mastery from 24 to 7 months.*

By all accounts, the program has been a tremendous success. The time it took for a new college graduate to achieve job mastery was not only reduced by half—which was the goal—but was further reduced to just seven months’ time.

Specifically, the initiative achieved:

- Improved progress towards the specific performance standards within the three, six, nine, and 12 month stages.
- Reduction of the amount of time required to go from “new graduate” to “job mastery” from an average of two years to just seven months.
- Increased sales revenue and improved results in key sales process metrics over a period of three years.

The managing director at the time was promoted and moved to the U.S., and for the next ten years, ABC continued to use the Whole Brain® approach, not only as a core part of their sales training, but also within other parts of the organization.

## UNLEASH THINKING POTENTIAL

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