

Case study for Chapter 4

Practical training for professionals

Practical Training for Professionals (PTP) is a training organisation which offers courses for several groups of professionals, including salespeople. Courses on offer for salespeople include the following:

- Handling objections.
- Advanced presentation skills.
- Closing the sale and dealing with objections.
- Persuasive presentations.
- Generating new business by telephone.
- Negotiation skills.
- More advanced selling skills.
- Developing major accounts.
- Understanding body language.

The courses run at regular intervals in various parts of the UK, and many other courses are available on request – delegates pay £295 each, or PTP will run courses in-house at the company's premises.

Clients include major blue-chip companies such as Ford, Hewlett Packard, Ladbrokes, Otis Lifts, and American Express. In fact 20% of FTSE companies have used PTP. The company has a string of testimonial letters, and excellent feedback from its customers and former course participants. PTP only employs 6 top-class trainers, but manages to cover the UK and provide an excellent service for its customers.

The training is undertaken in a classroom situation, with a lot of role-play and interaction with the trainers. Often the participants are fairly senior and experienced salespeople, who have been on advanced training courses before: this means that the trainers need to be extremely skilled, both to establish their credibility and to provide the participants with something new to take back with them.

Case Study Questions

1. Why would experienced salespeople feel the need to go on a PTP course? *Experienced salespeople may well feel that their presentation skills could be improved: many salespeople feel that their negotiating and objection-handling skills need to be improved, for example.*
2. What might be the problems of teaching objection-handling in a classroom situation? *Objection-handling relies heavily on being in the presence of a real customer. Classroom situations cannot duplicate this environment.*
3. What might be the purpose of a course on body language? *Buyers' gestures, postures and general demeanour give away their inner feelings. This is useful information for the*

salesperson. On the other hand, many professional buyers know about body language and are careful to conceal their true feelings.

4. What are the main pitfalls of standardised courses such as these? *Standardised courses can easily lead to standardised practice, unless the course is handled extremely well. Standardised practice is only one step removed from canned presentations, which lose the main advantage of personal selling, which is its flexibility.*