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CASE STUDY

Medical Appliances and Equipment Company Builds a Challenger Sales Force Using Profiles Sales Assessment™

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Profiles Sales Assessment™

Medical Appliances and Equipment Company Builds a Challenger Sales Force Using Profiles Sales Assessment™

In the highly competitive world of medical diagnostic equipment, a New York company and Profiles International client stands out as one of the largest manufacturers and distributors of medical supplies worldwide.

The innovative company's unique roots help differentiate it from the field. Its founders started by developing a crucial handheld diagnostic tool. Over the years, the company has realized success by creating more devices that aid in efficient and effective medical examinations—from scopes, to blood pressure cuffs, to weight management equipment. The organization leaves the designing and manufacturing of large equipment, such as CT scan and MRI machines, to other companies.

"We can work across a continuum of care, from hospitals to private practice," says the organization's lead sales analyst for the United States and Canada. "Our products are designed specifically for doctors' offices and hospital medical-surgical floors — which is the majority of the hospital." Adopting this as its vision from the very beginning gives the medical manufacturer a unique position in the industry.

Another focus steering the company is a **philosophy of putting the customer first.** "That means **listening** to what customers are **asking** for and **interpreting** that into the design of the device," says the analyst.

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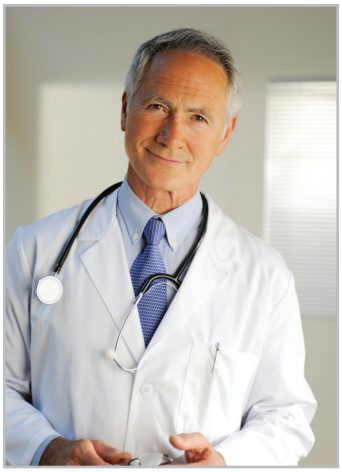
Partnering with the New York-based organization to help spread its devices to medical diagnosticians worldwide is Profiles International, which has certified the sales analyst in interpreting assessment results and coaching others in her organization to use the Profiles Sales Assessment.™

Background and history

The company is family-owned and headquartered in upstate New York. The company's entrepreneurial beginnings in the early 1900s provided a clue of what was to happen in future decades to revolutionize medical care.

The organization's roots go back to 1915, when its founders developed a hand-held, direct-illuminating ophthalmoscope to examine the structure of the eye. They knew doctors could

diagnose a number of medical conditions through an eye examination known as ophthalmoscopy. However, such an exam required a reliable and easy-to-use scope, so they created one for their needs.



Developing reliable sales was difficult in that era, however, due in large part to World War I. Not to be deterred, one of the founders took the device to a convention of the American Medical Association in New York City. He had not reserved a booth in advance because the company could not afford it. Convention organizers allowed him to set up on a card table near the men's room, which proved to be a strategic location. By the end of the convention, he had sold out his inventory and his company's future path was bright.

The founder's son joined the company in 1934, and with his vision and expertise in sales and strategic planning, the organization grew into the 2,500-employee, family-owned enterprise it is today. Now, the manufacturer operates in more than 26 countries.

From that early device created in 1915, the company continued to invent new tools and devices to make the medical practitioner's job easier, whether in an office exam room or a hospital department. The company refits entire hospitals—what they call the front line of care. Today, its instruments are in doctors' offices and hospitals around the world.

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The Profiles influence

The medical manufacturer is a dominant player in the medical device industry, in part because of its leaders' hands-on approach and commitment to personal relationships. That philosophy permeates the company, including sales.

In April 2011, sales leaders began using Profiles Sales Assessment™ (PSA) to identify excellent candidates and develop sales reps already on staff. The company's lead sales analyst for the United States and Canada coaches salespeople to exhibit Challenger behavior using an "outside-in" perspective for sales opportunities and development. "I try to make sure the voice of the field is represented," she says. She also helps hire sales reps using the Challenger Model, which is based on three key methods of how a salesperson takes effective control of a situation.

These methods include teaching, or offering insights; tailoring, or understanding what the economic and emotional value drivers are; and taking control of the conversation, or directing it somewhere the customer could not go on his own.

The Challenger Model comes from the Sales Leadership Roundtable, an organization that the analyst works with as a member of the corporate executive board. The group researches and addresses business challenges, and provides data and advice to help clients drive improved sales productivity. "The Challenger Model is the Roundtable's interpretation of research on the profile of the most successful sales representatives, regardless of outside influences like the economy," she says. Challengers are four times more likely to be high performers than any other sales profiles that research points to, which include the Relationship Builder, the Hard Worker, the Lone Wolf, and the Problem Solver, she notes.

When she began working as the organization's lead sales analyst, the PSA had been in use about six months. She became certified in how to interpret its results and how to coach others to best use it. She focused PSA use toward pre-hire as well as post-hire. Now, the PSA is a tool of the entire sales force—a team of about 125 people.

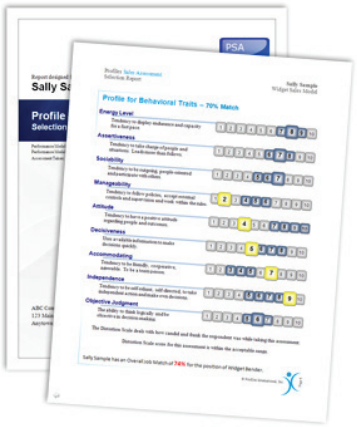
Profiles and the sales analyst worked jointly to develop a custom assessment for the manufacturer's sales force. "We took key attributes from the Sales Leadership Roundtable's research and worked with Profiles to show what the Challenger Model would look like on the PSA profile. A year after launch, we were able to do a concurrent study and tie in the stem scores even further," she says.

The assessment looks for key procedural strengths that a sales candidate needs to demonstrate to be a successful Challenger. When there is a gap between current performance and the goal, the sales expert works with a manager "to stretch people further."

Using the PSA, she discovered that the higher a person was on the sociability scale, the lower he or she was on sales. It was an indication that the person was better at building relationships than at focusing on the issue at hand. "We had a team of relationship-builders, which correlates with future benefit selling. What we are pushing them toward is utilizing a new

selling process rooted in the Challenger Model. There is a certain sociability range we want people to be in—not extreme, because the person would have problems turning off the social part and relationship building part."

The PSA helps by providing a look at a candidate's sociability scores. The assessment includes a unique job-modeling feature, which can be customized by company, sales position, department, manager, geography, or any combination of these factors. The medical manufacturer put a process on top of its foundation, which took a couple of years to create and launch. Tweaking the process continues to be a work in progress, says the analyst.



In addition to coaching company recruiters, counterparts in human resources, and sales managers on the types of questions to ask in a job interview, the analyst sees results from candidates' PSAs. "From the [assessment] results, I give interviewers questions to ask. They don't know what the results are until the person is hired, because we don't want it to skew the interview. We use PSA to help, not to include or exclude."

The sales expert went through the certification class at Profiles so that she would be able to read and correctly interpret assessment results. The assessment has helped the sales division hire more people who fit the Challenger Model. "We had a little over 10 percent turnover last year, and a lot of it was due to retirement. More people are in range this year, or are trending toward what we are looking for than before."

Using the assessment has made onboarding of new employees quicker, and the model is correlating directly to higher sales. "We have launched three or four major initiatives simultaneously, all building off each other, and have had more large deals close than we have ever had. PSA gives us the ability for targeted coaching for each manager."

If an employee does not appear to meet Challenger standards, the analyst and managers choose attributes they believe would be the most beneficial for the worker to develop. "These become part of the employee's development plan for the year," the analyst said. The plan includes "stretching" activities, such as how to mimic the behavior of successful people and pushing outside of one's comfort zone.

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The sales analyst likes the PSA's reliability and its reliance on science and math. "That has attracted me the most compared to any other assessment—its validity and reliability," she said. She also knows it will show her how new employees are going to behave once their "honeymoon" period ends—the first few weeks when employees are on their best behavior. She can see beyond that time, "because we are able to know what their abilities are." This translates to how she coaches each person. "If someone has a lower verbal reasoning score, I will be extremely persistent with directions, step-by-step, especially if someone needs to do something in a certain, very specific way."

Future

The organization continues to look into the future by researching and developing cutting edge devices. As the PSA helps develop the sales division, the sales expert has a continuing interest in new initiatives the PSA can help the organization achieve.

Although PSA is used only with the organization's sales force right now, she sees how expanding the use of the assessment would work for other areas. "It translates to all positions, and to succession and career planning, especially with the growing number of cross-functional teams."

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