
Studying Impact of Sales Training On Channel Partners of Idea Cellular Ltd, Gujarat

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Abstract

Purpose: *This study attempts to examine empirically the performance factors of channel partners impacted by imparting sales training. Impact of sales training on key business indicators was examined.*

Design/methodology/approach: *Channel partners were identified through convenience sampling. Their key performance data pre training & post training was taken.*

Findings: *Results suggest empirically that Channel partner key performance parameters such as New SIM cards sold, Customer acquisition through Mobile No. portability and Gross sales are influenced by sales training.*

Research Implications/Limitations: *Future research can include impact of sales training on other business parameters such as revenue and distribution reach. Also views from channel partners on perceived value of sales training provided to them can be considered.*

Practical Implications: *Findings of the study can be useful for sales training organizations and consultants to show effectiveness of sales training in order to win trust of their clients.*

Originality/Value: *This research focusses on few key performance indicators of channel business such as gross sales and impact of sales training on them.*

Keywords— *Impact, Sales Training, Channel, Performance*

I. INTRODUCTION

In a society that has become increasingly dependent on knowledge, skills and attitude it seems clear that companies plan various training interventions, which makes an important contribution to the overall investment in the human capital. Companies try to invest more on Manpower and ensure higher ROI on per manpower basis. Companies intend to critically undertake their decision on any such aspects. Training expenses add up to considerable amount each year. Approximately 3% of wage bills are spent on training by most of the companies and close to 45% of the employees are trained each year. Basic framework to evaluate impact of training effectiveness revolves around its output in terms of Employee and Organizational Performance

Sales Training focuses on enhancing functional competencies of sales team. It helps in developing skills that are required on day to day basis by the sales executive in

order to effectively strategies and execute tasks. Telecom business is hugely dependent on channel and distribution. It is spread in all parts of state including cities, rural and deep rural.

With so many complexities, changing products and dynamic products and schemes, sales training plays an important role in ensuring channel is able to absorb the same. It prepares channel for effective delivery and execution.

Training may impart relatively generic and easily transferable skills, or it may involve the development of firm-specific skills. Companies try to further conduct TNI (Training Need Identification) for each individual and accordingly prepare CPP (Career Progression Plan). Periodic evaluation and monitoring, helps to assess developmental needs of each person. Company may even plan for in-firm training programs because it is primarily in this venue that these skills are developed and aligned as per need of individuals.

Organizations map current competency skill set, and prepare Individual Learning Path based on current and expected future role.

Employee Development is composite of many factors which addresses many aspects, few of the dimensions are listed below for reference, such as - Personal Effectiveness; Personal and interpersonal relationships; Self efficacy; Emotional Intelligence; Morale; Confidence; Team spirit; etc.

Organization drives Training and Development of individuals to enhance organizational performance internally and externally. Internal orientation helps organization to equip team to address current and future roles leading to higher per person contribution. External orientation helps to address growing concerns such as – Customer satisfaction; Customer awareness, Brand recognition; Information penetration; Sales and Profitability. It helps to make them stronger, faster, and smarter than their competitors. It improves a situation where individuals, teams and organizations realize their potential.

As a routine practice company is interested in assessing meaningful utilization of their resources on trainings too. This is gaining significance as employee training in

corporates is a sizable cost to the organization with unclear results. With increased competition among companies and margins under pressure, companies are relooking at each and every spent. Managers and Employees tend to look at training as break from work. They at times fail to see the value in trainings as training benefits are hard to see beyond training feedback. Retention of the knowledge and behaviour changes acquired in the simulated environment of training session can be challenging to practice in day to day work and many participants don't take that journey.

Hence their concerns can be understood in terms of -

- Whether training really helps in achieving desired objectives?
- Does it really help in enhancing overall productivity on per person basis?
- Will there be significant ROI against investment made in terms of time, value and money for training.

If one goes through the literature related to this topic, hardly any work is done on impact of

sales training on sales employees in telecom sector which is related to sales function. Hence this study proposes to fill this gap in research. By examining a strategic plan, one can identify those areas of training that require evaluation and the extent to which you need to evaluate. Study is proposed for exploring optimum utilization of training as a tool, to generate the desired output. Purpose of study is to examine which factors determine effectiveness of training from an organizational perspective and employee development. Study intends to explore effect of training by studying the connection between training and profitability (for organization and individuals both).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been many studies both in India and abroad about training transfer and retention etc. These studies also touch upon impact of training on employee performance and effectiveness. Few studies have also been done in telecom sector. As the investment in telecom sector in India by firms is increasing, so is the scrutiny of performance of each of the departments. That is where training has huge role to play in ensuring better skilled employees who are able to use whatever learnings they have picked up during workshops to workplace.

Training department also gets scrutinized more and more regularly. Due to fierce competition, greater amount of investment in training is required if firms have get that cutting edge.

Nijmanet. Al (2006) studied effect of supervisor support on transfer of training. He found that supervisor support has no direct impact on trainee's transfer outcomes. However it improves transfer climate and hence impacts trainee's motivation. Hence they can play a role in training transfer

Pelham (2008) worked on impact of industry and training influences on salesforce consulting time and consulting effectiveness. The results suggested that Industry product differentiation has the greatest impact on consulting effectiveness. Industry customer segment number has a positive influence. The relationship between consulting time and consulting effectiveness is highest in commodity industries.

Donald L. Kirkpatrick (1997), Evaluation, Training and Development Handbook approached its, evaluation process in a more logical way. The author spoke about while evaluating training, instead of

just studying thereactions of the trainees, the study could be carried out in four different levels viz., i.e., reaction, learning, behavior and results. The author's guidelines and discussions on each level of evaluation of training are worth mentioning.

Backstorm T. (2004) studied collective learning. He pointed out different organizational aspects that are supporting and limiting the learning. He proposed a model for collective learning.

Doos M. et Al. (2011) researched on collective learning interaction and shared action arena in Sweden. Collective learning is associated with individual distribution of tasks, insufficiency as a foundation, a question-and-answer space, and the imprints of others in a shared action arena.

Dries N. et al (2012) worked on Role of learning agility and career variety in Identification and development of high potential employment. Learning agility (mediated by job content on-the-job learning) was found to be a better predictor of being identified as a high potential than job performance. Career variety was found to be positively associated to learning agility.

Kupritz et al (2002) studied relative impact of workplace design on training transfer. He brought about this point of how workplace design can influence training transfer. He proved that workplace design also has an impact on training transfer and hence should be conducive to training transfer.

Chenyi (2010) looked at impact of cross cultural training on expatriates in Chinese firms. He discovered Organizational performance was highly connected with Job satisfaction, Free choice for offer, expectation from firm.

Bailey et al (2002) worked at understanding Impact of multiple source feedback on management development. Result of the study is competence for managers perceived to be increased and developmental needs decreased. Relationship between self assessment and formal performance appraisal rating did become stronger.

Buyens et Al. worked on topic of challenges for hrd professionals in European leaning oriented organisations. He got understanding of companies main strategies, main change strategies, Reasons for increasing potential for learning at an organization level and benefits of creating a learning organization.

Orpen et Al. (1999) looked at impact of self-efficacy on employee training. He suggested that managers feel more confident in their ability due to formal training. Use employee centered training methods for affecting how employees view themselves. Self efficacy effect will not always operate but for few kinds of jobs.

Kraiger K. et al (2004) worked on various aspects of collaborative planning for training impact. They developed theory of impact. They also created reframe from proof to evidence, point of evaluation, isolated impact of training, establish accountability for training.

Stewar Black et al. (2000) studies high impact training to create and forging of leaders. Through this we learnt that training can help in getting new mindset for global leaders. Intensive and prolonged training designs are required to develop next generation of global leaders.

Burke Lisa et Al. (1999) researched on workforce training transfer & effect of relapse prevention training and transfer climate. Relapse prevention is best in unsupportive work condition. Self monitoring, personal goal setting etc. can

bolster trainee skill retention effort. Providing simple transfer strategies in the period after training appear to improve skill maintenance.

Jackson et Al. (2006) learnt about leadership development training transfer : post training determinants. Those who apply skills and concepts of Leaders in Learning Org. programmestand to gain. Also organization culture impacts training transfer. Application incentive(Boss support) and time to use the skills matter a lot.

Locht et Al. (2012) looked at getting most out of management training. They found out that Identical elements, expected utility and motivation to learn, each had a unique contribution to the prediction of training transfer. Whereas motivation to learn partially mediated expected utility also showed direct associations with these relationships, identical elements and training transfer.

Bhatti et al. (2010) studies role of an individual and training design factors on training transfer.They proposed framework for transfer of training to workplace that will improve emp and organization performance.

He also suggested that transfer design is important for effective transfer of learning.

Martin (2009) looked at various aspects of follow up for improving training impact. Martin clearly proved that Follow up activities resulted in improved transfer and had positive qualitative and quantitative effects on firm performance. Uncertainty reduction, self efficacy, risk management and trainee motivation can be addressed proper follow up activities.

Park et Al. (2007) researched on factors of transfer of training for workplace e learning. Positive compute attitude can make learner feel that e learning system is more satisfactory and efficient and hence better transfer to job performance

Batti et al. (2013) studied in Malaysia if training transfer truly happens. In this paper, he emphasized that Supervisor and peer support increases the motivation level to transfer learned skills. Intrinsic rewards has strong impact on training transfer.

Nikandrou et al. (2009) looked at another interesting aspect of trainee perceptions of training transfer in Greece. Results revealed the importance of trainee characteristics in the transfer process and provide useful

insights in to design and management of training program.

Singh et Al. (2011) worked upon Knowledge Management antecedents and its impact on employee satisfaction in Indian telecom companies. This paper proved that there is a correlation between Org. culture, Org. Learning, knowledge Management and employee satisfaction.

Roman et Al (2001) researched on various impacts and effects of sales training on sales force activity in Spain. Result proved that Sales training has significant impact on sales performance and customer orientation. But subsidized training has no impact on sales performance and customer orientation.

Colombo et Al. (2013) studied impact of training on productivity in Italy. It clearly proved that training has a positive and significant impact on productivity.

Fogel S. et Al(2012)in the article `teaching sales' discussed about lack of availability of rigorous academic work on sales as few sales professional have the time or the interest to obtain doctorate. Also they spoke about lack of focus of prestigious journals on sales.

Gordon G. et Al (2011) in a paper Training Sales Managers: Studying current practices discussed about Companies engaging in some level of training activities for managers. OJT and mentoring by senior manager most used training method and most effective. Mixed response about internet training. Training meaningful. Training method needs to be interactive and participative. Varied training being delivered by diverse instructors.

LaForge R. et Al (1997) in a paper 'An empirical investigation of sales management training programmes for sales managers' concluded that large companies provide the training to sales managers little earlier than small companies. Larger firms also tend to use role plays and case studies more. Also in small companies, marketing managers served as instructors in sales management training programme.

Shelford D. et Al (1995) in a paper 'The Training of Sales Managers: An Exploratory study of sales Management Study practices' discussed on Focus on continuous management topics such as coaching, motivating skills, time management etc. Workshop and OJT are most prevailing

methods for training. Training should focus on profitability running the business.

Chonko L et Al (1993) presented a paper 'Sales Training: status and needs' in which he argued that sales people are not satisfied with communication about benefits of training program, training material provided. Also they feel no reward for changing behaviour. Managers have infrequent follow ups post training. Also sales people not being involved in program inputs.

Wilson P et Al (2002) in an article 'investigating the perceptual aspect of sales training' concluded that learning orientation plays critical role in sales persons' training, Task specific self efficacy has a potent influence on transfer of training, Product knowledge also helps sales person in assisting customer in satisfying their needs.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Objective:

- To study Sales training effect on channel Performance

Hypothesis:

1. H_0 – Sales training has no impact on channel Performance

Target population

Channel of Idea Cellular will be source for primary data. Secondary information to be captured from MIS reports.

Sample Size and Grouping

The sample size for study is 200 prepaid distributors and Distributor Sales Executives

Data Collection and Analysis

To measure performance of participants who are trained, pre training and post training data has been collected.

- Data Source – Primary
- Research Approach- Descriptive– causal research
- Research Instrument- Qualitative Measure
- Sampling Unit- Channel Partners and their employees of Idea
- Sample Size- 200

Impact of sales training on channel was assessed on performance parameters such as

- a. New SIM cards sold
- b. Mobile No. Portability
- c. Gross (New cards + Mobile No. Portability) cards sold

These performance criteria have been selected as main responsibility of channel partner is to ensure new customer addition and bringing competition customer base in to idea fold. These parameters have been chosen as they are more critical from company and channel partner point of view. Earning of channel partner mostly depends on these parameters.

IV. ANALYSIS

The test is carried out on the collected data on various criteria of sales performance. Various criteria of sales performance are measured twice. First observation was taken at the end of July 2015 and second observation was taken at the end of month of October 2015. The t test is conducted to measure the difference of both observations. T test is used to measure the impact of sales training on sales performance. No sales training is given in the month of July 2015. Sales training is given in the month of

August. Sales performance is measured twice on the same criteria for this analysis. Performance in July is without sales training.

Sales training is given to respondents in the month of August. Performance of the same respondents was measured at the end of October. Paired t test was performed to measure the significance of difference of sales performance. No sales promotions schemes were given in the months of July and October. So all the other extraneous variables are under control. **See Table 1.**

New Card Sold

New card sold by distributor or retailer is one of the performance criteria. If sales have no effect then in that case the card sold by distributor or retailers would remain same. But if significance difference is noticed between two observations then definitely there is impact of sales training on cards sold. Paired sample t test was performed to measure the impact of sales training on new card sold. To measure the impact of sales training on card sold, paired sample t test was performed. T test is found significant, with (9.410, 0.000), depicts that there is impact of sales training on card sold.

Paired Samples Statistics

Table 1

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Card Sold October	305.17	200	416.41986	29.44533
Card sold July	155.54	200	237.04614	16.76169

Paired Samples Test

Table 2

	Paired Differences						
		Std.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			Sig. (2- tailed)
	Mean	Deviation	Mean	Lower	Upper	t	

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Card Sold October - Card sold July	149.62	224.8725	15.9008	118.2691	180.9808	9.410	199	.000

Table 3

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 MNP_ACH_O	27.3850	200	32.49518	2.29776
MNP_ACH_J	15.0350	200	20.52389	1.45126

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 MNP_ACH_O - MNP_ACH_J	1.23500E1	19.05368	1.34730	9.69319	15.00681	9.166	199	.000

MNP

Mobile No Portability or MNP by distributor or retailer is one of the performance criteria.

If sales have no effect then in that case the MNP by distributor or retailers would remain same. But if significance difference

is noticed between two observations then definitely there is impact of sales training on MNP. Paired sample t test was performed to measure the impact of sales training on MNP. To measure the impact of sales training on MNP achieved, paired sample t test was performed. T test is found significant, with (9.166, 0.000), depicts that there is impact of sales training on competition Nos. ported in Idea. **See Table 3.**

Gross (New cards sold + MNP)

Gross cards sold by distributor or retailer are one of the performance criteria. If sales have

no effect then in that case the gross cards sold by distributor or retailers would remain same. But if significance difference is noticed between two observations then definitely there is impact of sales training on cards sold. Paired sample t test was performed to measure the impact of sales training on gross cards sold. To measure the impact of sales training on gross cards sold, paired sample t test was performed. T test is found significant, with (9.634, 0.000), depicts that there is impact of sales training on gross cards sold.

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	TOTAL_UB__MNP_ACH_O	3.3256E2	200	443.82489	31.38316
	TOTAL_UB__MNP_ACH_J	1.7058E2	200	254.39180	17.98822

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 TOTAL_UB__MNP_AC H_O - TOTAL_UB__MNP_AC H_J	1.61975E2	237.76737	16.81269	128.82110	195.12890	9.634	199	.000

**CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND
SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This is the first step in towards the comprehensive study of impact of sales training on channel. It is important to assess the importance of sales training in terms of channel productivity and effectiveness. We can easily see that there is a direct link between sales training and channel productivity. We could see enhanced performance from channel post sales training intervention in key parameters such as new sim cards sold, attracting customers through Mobile No. portability and Gross cards sold (New SIM + mobile No. Portability).

Hence we can easily suggest that selling skill module has helped in improving distributor performance which would eventually help the company in market share and customer acquisition. Channel partner also stands to gain by earning more incentive resulting in more involvement in business.

This study focuses on channel partners of prepaid business which is significant chunk of business for telecom operator. It doesn't cover channel partners of other telecom businesses such postpaid and business solutions. We can broaden the scope of research by including channel partners of other telecom business streams as well. Different content of training intervention

will be required to create business impact in other telecom business streams. Also channel partner perception and views on sales training provided to them can be considered.

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