Closing More Sales More Quickly Through High Performance Sales Training
Oxford Health Plans Sales Training

Background: Founded in 1984, Oxford Health Plans, Inc. offers health plans to employers and individuals in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, through its direct sales force, independent insurance agents and brokers. Oxford's services include traditional health maintenance organizations, point-of-service plans, third-party administration of employer-funded benefits plans and Medicare plans. Including Medicare, Oxford has approximately 1.55 million members.

Oxford Medicare Advantage was founded in 1992 in order to provide Medicare recipients with an alternative to traditional Medicare. Over 60,000 Medicare beneficiaries in the tri-state area are currently accessing benefits and services beyond those offered by traditional Medicare through one of Oxford's Medicare Advantage plans.

Oxford Medicare Advantage combines the benefits of Medicare Part A and Part B, supplemental insurance and preventive care. Additionally, Oxford's members have access to thousands of board-certified physicians and the nation's first credentialed network of complementary and alternative medicine providers.

Oxford Medicare uses a staff of approximately 18 field sales representatives and managers and eight telesales representatives and managers to enroll new Medicare members. The staff has grown considerably recently due to Oxford's expansion into additional New York counties and into New Jersey.

Challenge: Due to the enormous potential in existing and new markets, Oxford Medicare Sales was looking to increase the effectiveness and professionalism of its sales staff. Oxford was enjoying a solid reputation as a provider yet had penetrated only 8-25% of the market in which it competes. The reasons for this included:

- Insufficient closing skills: Reps were getting in front of enough prospects but are not closing them.
- Insufficient qualification skills: If a prospect's doctor is not in Oxford's provider network, the prospect is unlikely to switch doctors – and plans. Reps needed to spend less time with these prospects.

- Insufficient questioning/objection handling skills: The close ratio for informational breakfast sales seminars is approximately 25-30%. Oxford Medicare's leadership believes that many prospects were leaving with questions unanswered and concerns un-addressed.

Additionally, there was a need to establish a consistent, effective sales process and a set of selling skills that would enhance the overall skillset of the Medicare sales team. While some members of the team were seasoned veterans with over eight years of experience (since Oxford entered the Medicare market), others were brand new – some with limited sales experience and none with experience in selling insurance to seniors. Moreover, 90% had not participated in ANY formal sales training.

Moreover, Oxford's sales leadership was looking for a sales training program that addressed the above skills AND met the following criteria:

- Embedded the challenges unique to selling Medicare coverage to seniors.
- Leveraged Oxford's strengths and key differentiators.
- Addressed priority, near-term skills within the context of a long-term, professional selling skills program.
- Addressed the unique needs of the telesales representatives and the field sales representatives while leveraging the commonalities the two groups shared.
- Leveraged the experience and expertise of the more senior sales representatives while addressing the significant learning needs of the more junior sales rep.

Solution: After a thorough needs assessment and working with Oxford Medicare's sales leadership, Entelechy created a comprehensive sales training program called *Oxford Medicare Professional Selling Skills*. The program was unique in several ways:

1. While the materials covered the entire selling process, only selected skills were focused on in the training. By presenting the entire selling process, less tenured reps could see how the skills they were learning fit into the overall sales process. Presenting the entire selling process also provided the platform for future training by Oxford's staff.
2. While the material was presented in a logical sales process flow, the first day of the delivery of this two-day course (separated by four weeks of on-the-job practice) focused on the priority skills of positioning, handling objections, and closing. The second day of delivery focused on questioning and positioning skills while reinforcing previously-taught skills.

Key to the success of the training was making the concepts come alive by creating:

- Actual Oxford responses to common customer objections.
- Effective questions that would elicit information and insight from prospects.
- Questions and positioning statements that differentiate Oxford from its competitors and inspire prospects to move forward.

Entelechy also created call monitoring and presentation feedback forms for managers to help reinforce key concepts and continue developing their staff. With a customized version of Entelechy's *Coaching for Performance*, managers were well-equipped to support their reps.

Results: All reps – both inside and outside – attended the training. Closings increased dramatically and immediately. Anecdotally, account reps indicated that they were more confident in their approach and that sales felt more like consulting – they believed more strongly than ever that they were helping their clients.

The primary stakeholder (VP of Medicare Sales) stated shortly after the training, "I've received some great anecdotal feedback from our participants. We worked well together in developing a great program. Your delivery was terrific! We're already feeling some of the enhanced results."