



ALUMNI NEWS

FOR CONSALIA GRADUATES + STUDENTS

Pushing boundaries in a volatile world

Alumni and other delegates at this year's GST conference explored creative ways to drive sales and open new markets and opportunities.

The business and political landscape is changing fast so the theme of this year's Global Sales Transformation conference was particularly apposite, taking place as it did against a background of Brexit confusion and Extinction Rebellion protests. Security was tighter than normal as delegates gathered at the London Stock Exchange on 15 October for a packed day of discussion around the topic "Pushing the Boundaries: This is not business as usual".

CEO Dr Phil Squire reflected on how market and economic changes are affecting sales teams

↓ Barry Gray © Nick de Cent



↓ Simon Quinton © Nick de Cent



before introducing a series of speakers who addressed a variety of themes around pushing boundaries, including agility, transformation, collaboration and collaborative relationships, coaching and mentoring, learning from failures and challenges, and embedding the mindsets to respond to a challenging environment. Delegates heard that sales departments, as never before in recent history, will have to adapt to a "new normal": organisations should be thinking not only how to mitigate risk during volatile times but also how to maximise the opportunities that lie ahead.

Resilience and mindset

One speaker who is no stranger to pushing boundaries is explorer and ex-Royal Marine Regimental Sergeant Major, Barry Gray – better known as Baz. Next year, Gray is due to attempt one of the last great challenges of polar exploration and trek unsupported across the ice shelf from one side of the Antarctic continent to the other. Gray, an admirer of early 20th century Antarctic pioneer Sir Ernest Shackleton, is planning to set out in his hero's footsteps in November 2020.

Well placed to discuss resilience and positive mental attitude, a topic that is so relevant in today's chaotic and fast-changing world, Gray encouraged delegates to follow whatever path inspires us, saying "Everybody has an adventure inside!"

Contributions from alumni and students

Emotional intelligence is another quality much in demand in the current business environment. Simon Quinton, VP Strategic Accounts EMEA at Infor and a Consalia alumnus, discussed EI, which was the research topic for his final Masters dissertation. A strategic sales leader with a passion for building and developing high-performance sales

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↑ Dr Phil Squire © Nick de Cent

Message from CEO Dr Phil Squire

This year has seen 40 new Masters students joining us from a fast-broadening array of organisations: SAP, SKF, Purolator, Royal Mail, Brammer, Sharp and Toshiba. We will definitely want to find ways to develop the Alumni network both socially and intellectually and will announce some new ideas and initiatives in the New Year.

I am always encouraged by the breadth of talent we encounter among the participants on our programmes; you can read about some of them in this edition. Who knew that SAP's Manal Siddiqui was once an international cricketer! Also, a big thank you to Simon Quinton of Infor and David Norris for their contributions to our recent GST event – see the report on this page.

We live in a very uncertain world right now and I rather like a term I heard the other day – that the "abnormal" is the "new normal". The skills of reflective practice that you have all mastered or are currently mastering will, I'm sure, help equip you all for the challenges that lie ahead!

Finally, I am well into writing my book and having to meet my own milestones with the publishers Kogan Page: so, to all those alumni in the midst of their own writing deadlines, you are certainly not alone!

Pushing boundaries

Manal Siddiqui has an infectious enthusiasm for cricket and work, these probably being the two things he loves most in the world, aside from his family. Indeed, when pressed, the former under-19 UAE international cricketer jokes: "Cricket is my first love, you know; that's what I keep telling my wife, "You are my second wife; my first wife is cricket."

Like many of his SAP colleagues who have participated in the Masters programme, he has spent the majority of his career in sales but these days Siddiqui has a wider remit, leading delivery of premium services with a team of 12 project managers across the Middle East.



P&L responsibility

"My career has been completely in sales," he explains. "However, in the middle of the Masters programme, the skills I was showing led management to believe that I could get into a people manager's role. Basically, I'm running a department called Premium Engagements. It comes under our services division and I have full P&L responsibility. Sales have a dotted line to me and my role is revenue-generating. So, I do have targets – services revenue targets, operating profitability targets, utilization targets, customer satisfaction – but perhaps I have a wider perspective than many other salespeople."

Unlike many of his generation, Siddiqui made a conscious decision to switch to sales early on in his career, following an initial role as a quality engineer. When the opportunity arose to move into sales and marketing with another company, he took it.

Asked what it is about sales that is so special, he tells *Alumni News*: "I've been into sales for 14 or 15 years, and it's very fulfilling. There are three things which I love about sales, which really give me a kick: first of all the negotiation itself and then the fact that I'm bringing revenue to the company and this is basically adding fuel to the ignition."

Importance of deal qualification

"The third thing which I realised over the years, and this is only after a certain degree of maturity, is how to qualify an opportunity and how to say no to some opportunities. This is actually really confusing for a salesperson, because you're always optimistic and you always want to engage yourself, but



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You are not there to lead them but to serve them, and the concept of servant leadership comes from two of the greatest leaders that I follow, who are Gandhi and Mandela.

opportunity qualification is something which I learned and I'm now teaching my other sales team members as well. Since I am the P&L owner, obviously the cost of sale is deducted from my cost centre."

Siddiqui is a member of the DQB (Deal Qualification Board), an important role in the company where deals are worth in the range of USD \$500,000 to \$5 million.

Challenging but rewarding

For Siddiqui, as with many other participants, the Masters programme has been challenging but rewarding. The sheer intensity of the programme is tough, especially in terms of maintaining a work-life balance. Family life – and cricket – were the priorities in any spare time left over from a full study programme and a job that involves travelling three or four days a week. Social life with friends was put on hold.

"The SAP Masters programme was a privilege and I am honoured to be part of this top talent programme. I'm really grateful to SAP Digital Business Services (DBS) management for considering me as a future leader."

Relevant

Just as importantly, the programme is very relevant to participants' work. Concepts can be taken and immediately applied across a wide range of roles. One example of this is the theme of Siddiqui's final project, which is highly specific both to his company and the geographic area which he covers. Titled "How to build a culture to boost Saudization based on total motivation factors", this dissertation focuses on how to provide a culture designed to attract, recruit and retain Saudi nationals in an industry that has traditionally employed expats.

Pushing boundaries on and off the pitch

So has Siddiqui been pushing boundaries other than on the cricket pitch? "I have a team culture which I follow religiously. We have a vision as a team and we have three cultural values. One of them is called 'demand excellence'. For us, this is such an important value – because whenever there is a promise made to a customer or there is a commitment made to an internal manager, or there is a forecast commitment and you're running against all odds, that is where you really demand excellence from yourself, where you put in effort."

He concludes: "It's not about winning or losing, it's all about having a growth mindset where effort is considered as a necessity to grow."

Transformation is emotional

myself better and more valuable to SKF. I really do think the minute you start losing the desire to develop yourself you start losing a little bit of an edge in how you work. I saw this as a fantastic vehicle and opportunity to improve.

"I didn't take this commitment on board at this particular stage in my life to make big career moves. I did it to improve my performance, improve my effectiveness, improve my contribution and do things that can help develop and inspire my own team. I remember talking to Phil [Squire] about my motivation and he still reminds me of my answer. He said: 'What was your motivation?' And I just said: 'I'm not done yet. I'm not done developing myself. I'm not done developing my business. I'm not done developing my people.' And the minute you feel you're done, okay, well, don't do these things. And maybe if when you reach that stage, you should step aside for someone else."

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I've learned a huge amount about myself and how I can improve my contribution and performance. I've learned about my colleagues.

David Norris explains his motivation for participating in the Masters programme and how the experience is reinforcing an ethos of continuous improvement at industrial giant SKF.

Like most companies, Bearings, Seals, Lubrication and Rotating Equipment systems specialists SKF operates an annual performance review system. At an individual review, David Norris, Sales Director United Kingdom & Ireland, presented his manager with an outline development programme in which he would have liked to participate. From the subsequent discussion an opportunity to participate in the Consalia and Middlesex University's Masters in Leading Sales Transformation programme was identified. From this initial discussion on personal development, Norris and five colleagues in his regional management group are now well into the second year of a journey of discovery.

Enthusiasm and commitment were key selection criteria for what is inevitably a taxing course. "The response I got from the organisation was extremely positive and supportive. It was emphasised to me the need to have someone motivated and enthusiastic to participate in this programme rather than having someone who was just doing this for the sake of doing a new programme. On my side I was really motivated to be a part of this experience and saw real benefits to be a part of this journey," Norris explains.

Moreover, he was fortunate that two members of his UK management group and three colleagues across Europe were also selected for the programme. "I believe this has been an absolutely fantastic experience for all of us, both professionally and personally."

Leading by example

Now a second cohort has joined the programme. "I think that's a huge commitment from SKF on how we are acknowledging our need to transform and develop our people to a higher level to face the challenges in our business. It's positive more of my colleagues who are heading up other countries in Europe, are now also on the programme. I think this shows strong and courageous leadership in that you're saying to your organisation, 'I'm not finished learning; I can still improve. If I can improve, you can improve, and we can improve together.' That's a really strong message to send to people, that the leadership acknowledge, 'Hey, this is good. We can learn new things here that can make everybody better.'"

But why heap all this extra pressure on yourself when you are already in a senior position? "A lot of people asked me: 'Why you? You're a senior sales guy.' Simply I want to make myself better. I want to make myself better as a salesperson, I want to make myself a better sales leader and I want to make

About David Norris, Sales Director United Kingdom & Ireland, SKF Group

David Norris has been with SKF since October 1985; it's 34 years since he joined as a trainee account manager where he started his sales career based in the regional office in Glasgow "learning how we did things in a sales organisation the SKF way in Glasgow, Leeds and the North of the UK". Since then he has progressed in a number of senior sales management roles with responsibilities ranging from local country management, European regional management, Strategic Account management to Global Account management along with Global sales responsibility for an SKF industry sector.

Cross-fertilisation and cascading ideas

With so many colleagues on the programme, there is significant opportunity for cross-fertilisation. "It's absolutely brilliant. There's six of us on this programme, six SKF guys at the moment on my cohort. We have all done three modules. That's 18 projects with a common theme and, if you take the most recent one – coaching – there are six fantastic projects now on how we can improve our way of coaching. That's got to be a really great opportunity for us to go forward and we are now actively cascading it."

"I am meeting our HR people here in the UK and regionally to talk specifically on developing the coaching activities that we're doing, which is fantastic because that fits perfectly with the last module. So, the opportunities to replicate best practice and learn how to improve are absolutely tremendous."

Why do a Masters?

Norris stresses that it is important to embark on the Masters for the right reasons. "I think first of all don't do it unless you want to do it. Seriously, if you're doing this just to impress people, forget it – because you're doing it for the wrong reasons. The word 'transformation' has taken on a more significant meaning for me. If you really want to transform and improve, if you want to learn more about yourself, if you want to learn more about your team and your organisation, and if you want to think of ways that you can improve, change things and make things better, do a Masters."

"If you don't want to do that, don't enter this arena. It is very challenging. It's also sometimes a little bit frightening. But I'm a huge promoter of this experience and I have thoroughly enjoyed it. I've learned a huge amount about myself and how I can improve my contribution and performance. I've learned about my colleagues."

And honestly, parts of it become very emotional. That's very deep. That's how deep you go when you start going into some of these things," he concludes.

teams to consistently deliver revenue growth, Quinton has held senior positions at SAP and Avnet but is now responsible for leading Infor's EMEA iMap team to drive multi-year strategic engagements, increase year-on-year sales and grow deal size. His presentation on "The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Driving High Performing Sales Teams" looked at the impact of EI on winning large deals.



↑ Samantha Wessels © Nick de Cent

Positive mindset is key to performance, he told the audience, and don't overthink things. "EI is a crucial competency. Professionalism and listening skills are key." Agility is what makes leaders successful: you need the ability to alter your style at speed and in the moment, and change your conversations at the point in time this is required.

He noted three critical EI elements for high-performing salespeople as being:

- Having a positive mindset
- Agile behaviour
- Transformative culture



↑ Stuart Leven © Nick de Cent

Meanwhile, David Norris, SKF Sales Director IM Sales & Marketing UK & Ireland, shared his insights on what it takes to align the sales organisation with a new value proposition based on the digital transformation taking place at SKF. One of the world's largest manufacturers of bearings, seals and lubrication systems, the group has been operating for an impressive 112 years.

You can find SKF product in anything from Formula One race cars to manufacturing plants and anywhere in between. However, there is an increasing emphasis on preventative maintenance and whole-of-life costs such that one of the main developments for SKF in recent years has been the introduction of fee-based contracts. This has required a significantly different approach to product sales. (See the interview with Norris on pages 2-3.)

View from the MD

Stuart Leven, Royal Caribbean Vice President EMEA and Managing Director of RCL Cruises Ltd, explained how the company focuses on differentiation in its operations and marketing.

In many of the countries in which it operates, the company is not the market leader, so seeks to behave like a challenger brand by being different: for instance, one point of difference is that the ships all incorporate iconic features to enable them to stand out from the crowd.

The road less travelled

Samantha Wessels joined Elastic as VP Sales a year ago, an opportune time with the company recently navigating a successful IPO. She described her role leading a fast-growing sales team across Europe and shared her perspectives on sales leadership for the specialist search engine that is embedded in apps such as Uber and Tinder.

Mentoring and coaching are key activities for sales leaders, while diversity and an inclusive workplace are vital for performance. While individuals need tenacity to achieve their goals, they should also consider the road less travelled and take some risks. You can

learn from failures; business is not just about successes, Wessels emphasised.

The days events concluded with contributions from Consalia directors Ian Helps and Louise Sutton. Helps shared insights he has gained while on sales transformation consulting assignments with organisations such as Mott MacDonald, Sharp and Lyreco, while Sutton explored the impact the UK's sales degree apprenticeship programme is having on students and their organisations.



Consalia is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, and providing a supportive environment for all. Our aim is to foster and develop a wide range of skills and experience, and to create a community in which diversity is valued and which both reflects and services the needs of the broader communities in which we operate.

News in brief



2019 graduation ceremony

The sun decided to really shine for this summer's Masters graduation celebrations on Friday 12 July – both for the ceremony at Middlesex University and the party afterwards in Paternoster Square. Our proud graduates were able to celebrate their success with their families in great surroundings.



↑ Axel Ferreyrolles (in front of screen, right) with delegates and Consalia staff.

Transform2Perform

Unleashing the visionary within you was the theme of a thought-provoking Transform2Perform workshop which was the inaugural event in our newly refurbished training room on 5-6 June. Led by SAP's Axel Ferreyrolles (one of our alumni), the training sought to investigate the mindset and worldview of "visionaries", improve creative thinking techniques, and blend advanced scientific concepts with leadership and personal development techniques. It certainly was a "transformative" workshop for all who attended, with participants finding it a mind-stretching experience.

Alumni News, November 2019

Editor: Yvonne Green, ygreen@consalia.com
 Consultant editor: Nick de Cent
 Editorial and production: Write Priorities Limited
 Design: Breathe Creative

Published by: Consalia Ltd – London, Singapore, Minneapolis

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