

Embedding change at O2 using 70:20:10

This case study explores the story of O2 business to business selling teams adopting the 70:20:10 learning model to change the way their people sold, build confidence and support, and finally to embed these changes into the new way things are done.



The business challenge

O2 is the commercial brand of Telefónica UK Limited and is a leading digital communications company with the highest customer satisfaction for any mobile provider according to Ofcom. With over 24 million customers, O2 runs 2G, 3G and 4G networks across the UK, as well as operating O2 Wifi and owning half of Tesco Mobile. O2 Business accounts for approximately a quarter of O2's total revenue of £5.3 billion.

Our midsize Business to Business selling team were seeing their revenues from traditional mobile sales irreversibly decline. Each Account Manager was dealing with approx. 150 accounts, and such a high number of accounts to manager ratio, meant that our people conversations were very tactical and reactive. Even more critically, they didn't have sufficient time to have conversations about our non-mobile portfolio, despite this being the new revenue stream that the business was banking on, to offset declining mobile revenues.

The Business Response

Give time back to the Account Managers to have deeper more strategic conversations by halving the number of accounts they were responsible for, whilst setting targets higher than the previous 150 accounts level. This is a massive ask, it's a bit like doubling a shop's target, when the number of customers coming in has halved. So this whole piece of work was a major change program, where the Team were restructured and the capability of Account Managers assessed. We also converted our Field Based team to be Desk Based (leveraging technology advances like conference calling and Skype for Business to do so), changed the role name to Digital Advisor, made it a more senior pay grade, and changed the pay plan.

L&D's role

Our role was to build a sustainable program that changed the way our people sold, and to build the confidence and support available to our people so that they could effect this change.

In short our now called Digital Advisors, had to understand their customers business far more, and significantly increase both the number of people they were speaking to in each business, and provide value in those conversations. They needed to understand their KPIs, Challenges and Wider goals and how can O2 support them in achieving these?

Challenges.

- Current working practices. Previously most of our salespeople had been successful selling in a particular way, we knew they had to change their approach but how could we get them to see that, without experiencing months of below target numbers?
- The managers were only slightly ahead of their people in terms of their knowledge and skills in this new way of selling, so how could we develop them as experts, so they could support the change required without exposing them in front of their team?
- Despite the team all working out of one location, there was little collaboration, meaning the team were failing to leverage the knowledge and experience of their 100 plus team mates.

What we did

Historically, we had used Deal Coaching sessions to review live deals that salespeople needed help and advice on. Typically, they were unstructured sessions, with limited amounts of coaching where managers dished out advice to salespeople on what they needed to do to progress the Deal. This had to change because:-

- It cemented the old tactical way of selling.
- This directing behaviour led to a culture of salespeople going into these sessions and being told what to do, limiting the amount of on job learning and problem solving they would do themselves.
- The managers became a bottleneck as all “stuck” deals had to go through them.

Why use 70:20:10?

- We had to harness the incredible experience and knowledge across the team to benefit all, and break the thought that it’s only my manager I speak to when I need support.
- We needed to accelerate the learning around the new way of selling, and to sustain long term we needed to get the teams to believe in this new approach. You are unlikely to get this level of belief, by telling people what to do.
- To embed this change we needed to make sure that the solution was owned and driven by the sales team, and not seen as an L&D initiative.

70:20:10 – What is it?

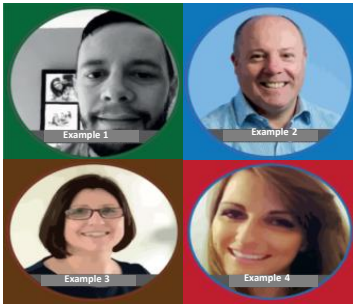
The essence of the 70:20:10 framework is that learning occurs through a range of approaches, being roughly:

- 70% from real life and on-the-job experiences, tasks and problem solving.
- 20% from feedback and from observing and working with others.
- 10% from formal training such as classes or courses (both face-to-face and online) and reading.

Making connections where they count

This team has people who have experience across all sectors and products and services. So we wanted to make it easy for everyone to find out who knows what, and encourage them to connect with each other; building team spirit and accelerating learning.

To do this we took two huge wall spaces, got pictures of everyone and let the team stick up pictures of people around the particular sector or product they knew lots about (so they interacted and understood what the wall was for).



For the team to understand each other better and how best to approach different people we also ran a mass Tetramap (sorts people into four types of personality preference) for the whole team - so the colour coding (green, blue, brown, red) on each of the picture also demonstrates the person's Tetramap preference (Earth, Air, Water or Fire). On "the wall" are reminders about what these mean and the best way to approach (and not approach) each of the four preferences, critical in developing relationships, and getting the best from your colleagues.

For example, people with a Fire Preference are great at generating ideas and are future focused so if you were asking a "Fire" for help you'd give them an overview of the customer and sector, and ask what would they do if this customer was theirs to add value in the short, medium and long term? People with an Air preference are great with logic and structure, so you'd ask that person what were all the steps you would take to generate value for the customer, and how would you establish and prove the business case? If a salesperson asking for support, by using the language that the "expert" favours, you are much more likely to get great insight and advice from them.

We also used Yammer (business social networking tool) extensively to report on the key sales stories, and pull out the successes people were having in this new way of selling. We did this to underline the success in selling in this way, and highlight the trailblazers to talk to for tips and tricks.

Finally, every two months we summarise and shortlist our best sales story finalists, get the team to vote for their winner and then videoed and shared their stories so people can see how they did it and again know who to go to for advice.

The 70. How does this play out?

The 70 is about the real life experience, and how you are using your new skills with customers.

To drive on the job learning, we needed people to try all elements of the new sales approach, so we set tasks to complete before and after every Deal Coaching session, where they have to speak to their customers and complete certain activities. The managers played a key role in making this happen, not just in making sure that our people completed their tasks, but also in positioning with each individual its importance. The managers (and their colleagues too) supported when required, and provided feedback and coaching after listening into calls / attending meetings. Finally, and in my opinion most importantly, they remained focused on what we were trying to deliver, and gave the people the confidence that this was not a passing phase, but a permanent change.

We also had a whole host of job aids that we made available on-line, on tablet and on mobile. Included were 90 second animations that explained the key sales theory, blank and completed example sales templates, and access to marketplace and sector news that updates daily, keeping our people in touch with developments in the market and in their customers segments.

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33 ❤️ 20

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5 ❤️ 2

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The 20

In addition to connecting staff with each other, we also focussed on supporting and building managers knowledge and skills so they become expert deal coaches. L&D wrote the core deal coaching sessions, and lead the managers through a Train The Coach for each one, we also provided support (when required) to the manager when delivering. The 90-minute Deal Coaching sessions are short and to the point, and the managers whole team are present (not just the people with deal's to review) but this posed us a challenge in how we get the balance of these sessions right?

We didn't want the new deal coaching sessions, to look and feel like the old deal coaching where you presented a challenge with a deal, and the manager told you what to do. Yet, there were key themes in the learning that we wanted to cover in all the sessions to challenge and develop our peoples understanding. To manage these opposing forces, we focused on what we wanted to achieve, but didn't script / mandate the how, leaving that up to the individuals to decide. The Managers role was to cover key sales principles, and to coach and facilitate the discussions – but it was the team that took the deal, and worked out together the best way to progress it. After the sessions, the salesperson put into action this plan, whilst continuing to enjoy the support of their managers and team who felt part of the deal because of their contributions.

Yammer has also been a great resource here, where people can update everyone on their progress and findings, ask questions of the wider team, or broadcast to the team what worked well. To work in the early days of this program we needed to be very deliberate in our use of Yammer. This took the form of asking the Leadership and Managers to post regularly on the site, asking Sales Managers to post the success their people were having with this new type of selling, and getting Leaders to comment and praise these. After a couple of

months of “forcing” Yammer it started to develop a life of its own where all roles and seniorities would regularly post and comment, which all helped to underline the key messages of :

1. This new selling approach works.
2. We learn ourselves, we learn off our managers and we will learn from our colleagues.

The 10

In the 10, we had two one day training sessions. The first covered all the key elements of Creating Client Value which is the sales methodology we use to underpin deal coaching. We again leveraged, on line learning in advance of the sessions, so that the managers had completed all the key sales theory before the workshop ([flipped classroom](#)), leaving time in the sessions to focus on discussion, group work and learning activities. The sessions was opened by the Head of Medium Business Sales, where she underpinned the importance of this program, her commitment to it, and the transformational role that the managers would play in bringing this to life and securing our future success.

The second classroom sessions provided the basic skills, structure and critically practice on how to run deal coaching sessions.

Outcomes

Despite being early days, in our first quarter we moved from 50% of our salespeople being at or above target to over 70%, so 20 more people hitting targets in the first quarter alone. These targets are the new targets, where we effectively doubled the sales numbers whilst halving the number of accounts, so such a shift is highly significant. We are now in our second quarter and it looks like just over 80% of our people will hit or exceed target.

Also for a long term focus, all this content maps into our Manager and Salesperson Competency Framework and even though we are only midway through this program, our people as an entire team have moved from underperforming in this capability to over performing. That is again a huge shift in the overall capability of our people. We have built the capability of our people, by providing motivating learning, that’s been constantly re-enforced, and that capability has translated into the strong business results referenced above.

Final Thoughts

The 70:20:10 model is a more labour intensive approach for L&D but worth the extra work. In this situation just providing the 10 would not have given us the required outcome. It’s not about doing what L&D’s expected to do, i.e. put on a course it’s about delivering real business outcomes, and for that 70:20:10 works.

How much is 70:20:10 a reality? In learning circles it’s a very well know theory, but I found few examples externally of what business have actually done to adopt (particularly the 70), so I felt we had to create from scratch a lot of the solution, rather than basing it around an understanding of what’s worked elsewhere.

Interestingly, with my stakeholders I chose not to reference the 70:20:10 theory directly, even though I love theory, my stakeholders do not. They are interested in what’s going to work, so when we got their sign off it was about what we were going to do and why.

E.g.

- We need to unleash the massive experience of the team, to the benefit of everyone.

- To facilitate this we need to make it easy to understand who knows what.
- We need to be fully committed to this new selling approach.
- We need to witness it happening all around us and take responsibility for making sure it does.
- The managers hold the key to its success and failure so we will provide the resources, commitment, structure and support for them to succeed.

And crucially, to the Senior Management the big ask, the big how serious are you about this question?

To win, it's the channel that needs to own this not L&D. Are you and your team fully committed to delivering it? I was ready to remind Senior Management of this promise if required, but as 70:20:10 was helping them to achieve their number one objective for the year, I never needed too.

Bringing learning closer to the heart of business – lessons learned

- Take responsibility for all learning in the organisation, not just the 10%. The 70 and 20 needs to be planted and tended for you to have a real impact, so needs to make up the key part of your learning planning and delivery. If you truly want to drive business outcomes, you cannot take a laissez faire stance on 90% of how people learn.
- To do that you have to really understand the need, the size of the capability gap, the benefits of success and the costs of failure. Use your stakeholder conversations to predict both the cost of doing nothing and the likely failure points, and mitigate them. I had to develop my consultancy skills to be able to do this really effectively.
- Don't be obsessed with the quality of learning delivery; professional presenters from L&D would probably run more slick, stimulating, sales coaching sessions with more sophisticated exercises than line managers do.
- But these "better sessions" aren't better if they get inferior results. It's the ownership, commitment and engagement of the management and sales team that gets you the results, so harness that.
- Develop Perseverance and Persistence, there were times when I thought be careful what you wish for. Such a large project, over a long time frame with so many moving elements has been a real personal and professional challenge. Just reminding and prompting managers to put their teams great sales stories on Yammer, and for Senior managers to remember to recognise those stories, took lots of energy and effort and this formed a relatively small part of the project delivery. Use whatever works for you to get through it, my manager and colleagues were a key support here, together with the fact that however challenging it may have been, I knew it was the right thing to do for our people, the business and our futures.

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