

Case Study: Tetra Technologies Houston, Texas

Tetra sales force dust off old habits and hone skills for increased sales

By Christine Van Matre

Tetra Technologies was doing well. But the \$400-million-per-year Houston oil and gas service company wanted to see improvement in the company's sales.



Enter consultant and sales specialist Mark Holmes, who has spent two decades training salespeople in many different industries and business climates.

Holmes' experience with Tetra dates back some twenty years, when he was a top young salesman for the company. So when Tetra needed sales training, they called him. Holmes' task with Tetra? Get the sales force on the road to time management and strategic selling.

According to Holmes, hit-and-miss sales attempts won't work in the fierce oil and gas market. "They needed to be equipped to uncover *all* of their customer's needs, as well as close more business and prevent lost sales," Holmes says. "They also needed to learn how to sell business at higher prices, and make those higher prices stick."

Holmes' training techniques and comprehensive approach made his time with Tetra benefit both new and seasoned salespeople alike. "Being a novice to sales, this course has been a great help to me," says Richard Dogett, engineer.

Teaching newer salespeople is one thing but helping established salespeople break out of old, outmoded routines can be challenging. Holmes and Tetra's longtime salesmen met that challenge, as evidenced by their enthusiastic feedback. "I have attended many sales courses during my career – this one was definitely one of the very best," says Tetra salesman Joe McKinney. "It has helped me tremendously, especially the sales planning and strategy-setting training."

Another sales force veteran says Holmes' focus is on planning for sales calls – not relying on years of experience and just winging it. "I now plan my calls in advance," one salesperson says. "We take things for granted over a period of time during our careers."

What's left to teach an 'old sales dog'? Two seasoned Tetra salesmen spoke up freely. "In my 24 years of sales, this has been one of the most interesting and informative training courses I've taken – very well thought out and well taught," Tommy Webster says.

"This course has been the most rewarding of all my other sales classes I've taken – more in-depth and more applicable to the needs of our industry," says Sterry Cressionie.

What set Holmes' training apart from others in the sales training pack? First, Holmes conducted a thorough needs

assessment among the salespeople. Then he built Tetra's training and coaching process around those specific needs.

The most unique aspect to Holmes' approach may be direct accountability, the crucial force that keeps well-intended training from going in one ear and out the other. "It isn't about learning, it's about *applying*," Holmes says. This critical element is woven into Holmes' sales training, which takes place over nine-twelve months – not a day or two like most training programs. Holmes also develops online sales tools, such as a Sales Call Planner. For Tetra's salesmen it was a tool they utilized before each sales call with much success.

This comprehensive approach to Tetra's sales situation *worked*. Tetra's sales in the fluid division increased *dramatically*, according to Tetra's Vice President of Sales Steve Hardwick.

One Tetra salesman summed up Holmes' background and methods. "Mark Holmes has done a great deal of research on the selling process that has helped me understand why sales is such a challenging field, but more importantly he helped me change and achieve better results."

Holmes believes (quite adamantly) that the bottom line is to make training and coaching *pay* – not just come in, get the troops fired up and watch it vanish within a few weeks or months. "Getting salespeople to enthusiastically buy in and use the training to improve their sales skills and time management long-term is achievable," says Holmes.

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