



DAVID BUTTERFIELD is head of learning and development at Aggregate Industries, a leading manufacturer and supplier of materials for the construction industry in the UK, Channel Islands and Northern Europe. Visit www.aggregate.com

THE REAL RETURN FROM SALES TRAINING

DAVID BUTTERFIELD of Aggregate Industries describes the real return on investment to be gained from training in the sales marketplace



In today's challenging trading conditions, businesses cannot afford to rest on their laurels and continue to use the same tried and tested methods and systems. Rather, regular training and upskilling is vital to ensure they retain a competitive edge and future proof their business.

Understandably, the initial time and monetary investment required when it comes to training and development can often be a deterrent for businesses, particularly in hard times. However, it is important to remember that a business's greatest asset is invariably its people, and ensuring that employees reach their full potential is not only good for them as individuals but is also good for the business, often resulting in increased employee retention, improved production and enhanced profits. This is particularly important when it comes to ensuring a strong sales team, which is inherently critical to business success.

At Aggregate Industries, for example, among other initiatives, we have invested heavily in offering an Institute of Sales Management (ISM) qualifications programme to our UK sales division over the past three years.

One of the main reasons we introduced the

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programme was to further develop the skillset of our salespeople, so that they continue to grow as individuals and boost company performance within a challenging industry.

Taking an innovative approach to learning, our training solution lies in a fruitful three-way partnership between ourselves, the ISM and Growth Engineering, an award-winning learning technologies company. Together, we created the Aggregate Academy, an online learning portal offering a full library of high quality ISMM Level 3 and 4 sales training content.

Our academy is made up of an e-library of sales modules – meaning participants can learn as and when they choose, when it is convenient for them to do so. It is ideal for our busy sales teams, who simply can't afford to take a day off the road. When combined with interactive workshops, the course provides an ideal environment for learning and achieving success.

As an added benefit, the introduction of the programme at Aggregate Industries has created a universal platform where all employees can discuss and debate ideas and issues surrounding their everyday roles.

The results really do speak for themselves. Since introducing the Aggregate Academy, all of our sales teams have become fully qualified, and there has been a significant improvement in both skills and behaviours. Better still, there has also been a sense of pride injected across the team for achieving an accredited qualification, helping to inspire the team to excel and go the extra mile.

As part of our ongoing relationship with the ISM, we also regularly assess our salespeople in relation to their individual continuing personal development plans, in order to ensure that they are maintaining existing skills and knowledge, and keeping up with new developments.

It's through experience that we all grow and develop skills and this is certainly the case when it comes to training. In an increasingly competitive marketplace, regular training should be considered as part of a business's broader strategy and for the continued growth of the industry as a whole. In this way, investment in people rewards businesses with a real return on investment.