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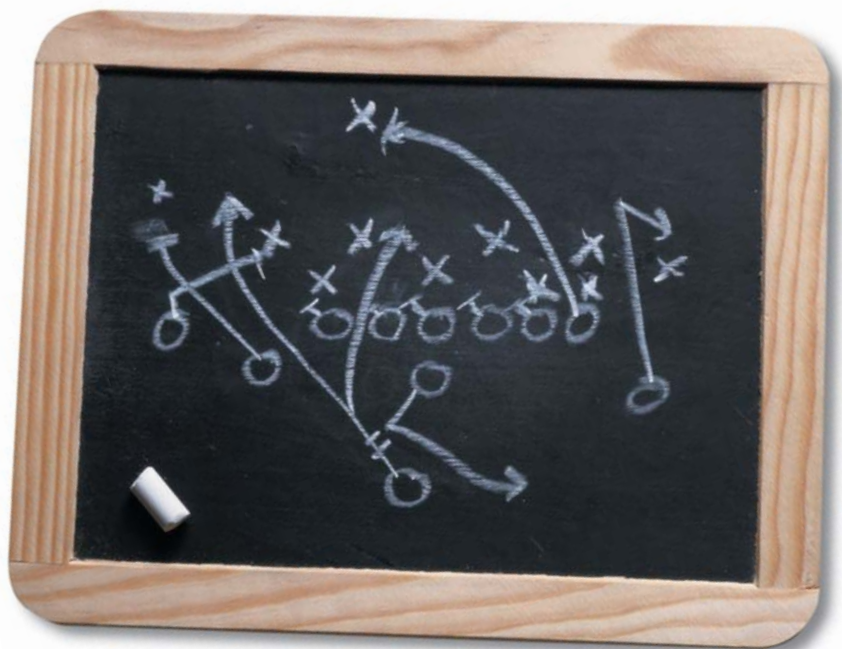
# MEG WHITMAN

**The \$40 billion eBay sales story**

# train

A Hands-on Guide for Sales Managers

## your sales team



Based on interviews and on-site visits to Career Coaches Inc., Ron Frechette and the staff of CCI. Frechette may be reached at Career Coaches Inc. 12276-208 San Jose Blvd. Jacksonville, FL 32223 Telephone: 904/880-8711 Web: [www.cciorg.com](http://www.cciorg.com)

## How to Create a Self-Training Sales Force

*An inside look at a training program that brings Selling Power articles to life*

Career Coaches Inc., is the executive-search arm of Jacksonville, Florida-based biotechnology consulting firm, BioPointe Inc. CCI specializes in recruiting for the health-care industry, including biotechnology, pharmaceutical and medical-device specialties. The firm also recruits for contract sales organizations and other sales and marketing companies. Company founder and CEO Ron Frechette was a top-ranked salesperson, recruiter and trainer in a variety of sales organizations before applying his experience to the executive-search industry.

It's not often that you see a magazine article brought to life, but that is exactly what CCI (and on the day I was there, Neil Kelleter) does with various how-to sections of *Selling Power*. Using the conference room of CCI, Kelleter delivered a training session based on a May 2003 *Selling Power* article about value-based selling entitled "The Flip Side of Price" to the company's executive-search consultants.

As the audience finished slices of pizza

and Kelleter launched into his presentation, he introduced Ben O'Hanlan, president and COO of Sealevel Systems Inc., on speakerphone. O'Hanlan, a primary source in the original article, described the success his company has had using value selling to maintain healthy margins in a highly competitive industry. Next, Kelleter showed humorous video clips, featuring salespeople from such movies as *Used Cars* and *Tommy Boy* as the basis for group discussion. Then, with a simple and effective demonstration using three coffee mugs, he described how added value correlates to a higher selling price. Next, he brought three employees to the front of the room to read selling scripts that demonstrated how selling value differentiates a salesperson. Finally, he broke the group into smaller teams to create a list of the attributes and services that CCI offers its clients – a list that each participant can use whenever clients press for lower fees. While the idea of using a magazine article and a phone call from the

manager profiled in the article to train reps may be innovative, the most startling part is that Kelleter completed the fast-moving, engaging session within the CCI's lunch hour.

It's hard to believe that Kelleter isn't a professional trainer. He's actually an associate search consultant, one of CCI's most recent hires and new to the search industry at that. The following week, one of his colleagues will take his place at the front of the conference room and lead a new training session based on another *Selling Power* article and so on and so on. It's all part of a program that Frechette calls MEGA-Bite™ Training.

### **MEGA-Bite's™ Genesis**

Sales training is a challenge in many companies, especially smaller firms and those with commission-based sales forces. Small and midsize companies often forgo training because they do not have the budget for a dedicated training staff or because they cannot afford to pull sales-

people off their jobs long enough to train them. Compounding the problem, many commission-based salespeople, who aren't earning money when they aren't selling, actively resist the time investment required for training.

"Training is difficult," says Stephen Nalley, CCI's executive vice president. "There are days when we've got training scheduled, and it's like, 'Man! I have got 150 things I need to do.'" Nevertheless, training remains a critical element in sales success. "Show me one good rep that doesn't train," continues Nalley. "If you are not constantly out there learning stuff

like we learned today, you are not going to understand how to sell and how to handle price objections. You may be doing it the way it was done 10 years ago, or even a year ago, but times change. The selling concepts change the same way that technology does."

Further, the quality of your salespeople has a direct impact on business results. Sales forces that aren't well trained tend to operate in sink-or-swim environments where the sales effort is inconsistent and unpredictable. Sales performance and corporate revenues suffer.

A lack of training can also contribute to a high turnover rate. "People come in. None of them have any real idea of what is involved in this business when they walk in the door," says David Riley, one of CCI's two directors of Executive Search Services. "But if they can come in and be successful at it and also

feel like they are part of a team and enjoy where they work, they stay. Training can bring them up to that level, and that reduces our turnover."

These were the challenges that Frechette faced when he was employed by a training firm that provided one-on-one telephone skills seminars to salespeople in automobile and marine dealerships. Because the telephone skills of the firm's salespeople were a direct reflection of its seminars, it was especially important for them to be highly polished and effective when they were on the phone with prospects. As Frechette remembers, however, "We just had a hard time finding time for training."

Frechette solved the problem on a shoestring. "We were recording our reps' sales calls, but we didn't have time to play them back and learn from them. So I said, 'Why

don't we just do it during lunch one day a week? We'll order lunch in and go through the calls together. We'll eat while we train.' If you think about it, there is no downtime to it. We tried it, it worked great and I have been implementing it ever since," says Frechette. MEGA-Bite™ Training was born.

Frechette brought the MEGA-Bite™ approach along when he entered the executive search business, another telephone-intensive selling environment. He went on to found CCI, and as such blue-chip clients as Johnson and Johnson, Boston Scientific and Bausch and Lomb came on board, growth accelerated (600 percent in the past two years). Once more, he dusted off the MEGA-Bite™ concept to train the expanding staff.

## Honing Critical Skills

Today, Frechette characterizes MEGA-Bite™ as the "big baby" in CCI's training arsenal. The company runs the program in a dedicated series of weekly sessions, the last of which concentrated on business development – the critical establishment of new corporate client relationships from which the firm's placement assignments flow.

"Business development is the big initiative that we are driving right now," explains Frechette. "Everybody seems to be afraid to go out and develop new clients. It's understandable. You are dealing with some of the most well-respected companies on the face of the earth. This is a very prestigious selling environment, and you've got to be on your toes."

To build the staff's skills and confidence, Frechette and his management team decided to focus a MEGA-Bite™ series on live presentations. Once each week, a search consultant would make a lunchtime presentation to the rest of the staff, who acted as the prospective client.

"We wanted to see everyone present and get that practice," says Nalley. "And we hammered each other. There is a review session afterwards, and it's pretty harsh. It's 'you didn't do this and that and that.' It's an eye-opening experience, and you can say, 'All right, I have made those mistakes, but I won't make them again.' It's good because it doesn't really matter what happens in here. If you miss a couple of things in here, you have lost nothing but just an ounce of pride. You miss it out there, it's \$5 million. That is not good."

The next MEGA-Bite™ series focused on telephone contacts. "We created mock scenarios. Your job was to call into the conference room to this room full of executives, which was our entire team, and sell us on your ser-

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## Quick Tips for Leading A MEGA-Bite™ Session

**Make it personal.** If you can tap into your personal passions, you can build a more authentic presentation. For instance, CCI rep Karl Hague wore his Marine uniform when presenting a segment on selling with integrity.

**Ask for advice.** You can ensure that your presentation is grounded and on track by reviewing its content with your manager beforehand.

**Make it interactive.** Lectures are the least effective way to get a memorable message across. Include the audience members in your presentation whenever you can.

**Provide practical takeaways.** Make sure all participants leave your training with tips, tools and techniques that they can use to improve their results.



# At Your Next Sales Meeting

**The MEGA-Bite™ Training approach is relatively informal and uncomplicated to adopt. Below are 11 practical steps for implementing this training approach in your company.**

- 1.** Get buy-in from your sales team. Before mandating the training, build enthusiasm and support for MEGA-Bite™ by soliciting their opinions and communicating the value they will receive.
- 2.** Carefully choose series topics that support the current training needs of the entire team. The topic of the series predetermines the boundaries and value of the training.
- 3.** Provide access to raw materials that resonate with the sales staff. Create role-plays, featuring the customers to whom your team will be selling; invite sales and industry experts to speak; tape and analyze actual customer calls; use authoritative sales and industry magazines, newspapers and books to introduce new skills and techniques. Look outside your industry for innovative ideas.
- 4.** Schedule the training at the same time each week. Consistency and repetition will help make it a permanent fixture at your company.
- 5.** Require that everyone on the sales staff teach one session per training series, including you and other managers. If you sell in teams, consider having teams conduct each training session.
- 6.** Have your salespeople use the technology they use in the selling process to create their training sessions. This is an excellent opportunity to enhance your team's ability to use hardware and software, such as PowerPoint.
- 7.** Create a short list of session guidelines, so your people know what is expected. Be sure to include the requirement that all information be translated into terms applicable to your selling environment.
- 8.** Be available to assist salespeople who request your help. They won't make their best effort if you don't take their work seriously.
- 9.** Create assessment forms for the presenter and the audience. Have everyone on the team assess each session. Provide rewards for the best training.
- 10.** Videotape the sessions. Require anyone who misses a training day to view and assess the tape. The tapes can also serve as the basis for a sales-resource library.
- 11.** Make it fun. MEGA-Bite™ is the antidote to dry, lecture-based training. Encourage your salespeople to enjoy teaching and learning by creating a casual, lighthearted atmosphere.

### Tips for Managing MEGA-Bite™ Training from CCI's Leadership Team

Make it real. "In other words, make it apply to the people, and show how it can improve their job, their business," says Riley. "If we tell these people something every week that will help them every day, then it's obviously much more interesting to them and improves the whole company as well as the individual."

- Timing is important. "Do it at lunch or breakfast," says Tresca. "Salespeople can be very sensitive about their time. If you are going to take time away from your people, make sure it's not in prime time for them. Also, keep it 45 minutes to an hour. Any longer than that and people start getting antsy."
- Don't stifle the creative urge with too much oversight. "I think that so many people have so many things to bring to the table, if you put too many parameters on it, you may lose something valuable," says Tresca. "The beauty of this is seeing what someone individually pulls out of it. It works fine as long as your people know what they are going to be scored on."
- Set the bar by going first. "Either Stephen or I take the first session," says Frechette. "I did the first *Selling Power* MEGA-Bite™ session on what makes you tough. I came out in my old boxing robe and boxing trunks. I had a mouthpiece and gloves and hand wraps. I had to pull it out of the attic. They were my props. I had to set the bar."
- Save your critique for last. "Stephen and I always try to go last," says Frechette. "We want to get everybody else's input first, so the rest of the group doesn't just echo what we say."
- Make it competitive. "There are a lot of things at stake here in addition to first, second and third prize," says Nalley. "We're growing, and promotions are taking place. When we get into our new building, I suspect two more people are going to be promoted to director positions. That is a reason in itself to prove yourself as a leader and be able to deliver a message."

*Use the space below to make your own notes on creating an inside training program.*

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vices. You go through the value-added benefits and you negotiate a deal,” says Nalley. “Now, we can sit in a classroom and talk about this and that. But if you can’t see it, if you don’t get the opportunity to exercise it, I think you would agree that it’s pretty much useless.” Again, after each presentation, the group critiques the performance, learning from each other and improving their own skills at the same time.

Neil Kelleter’s presentation is part of CCI’s latest MEGA-Bite™ effort – a 14-week series on selling skills based on articles culled from back issues of *Selling Power*. In this series, CCI search consultants prepared a presentation based on an article drawn from a pre-selected list. In doing so, they have expanded their role from players in a simulated selling engagement to full-blown sales trainers.

“It’s related to the whole See One, Do One, Teach One philosophy,” says Beth Tresca, director of CCI’s Executive Search Services. “Once they’ve watched, have them do and then, when they’ve mastered that, they go on and teach. I think that whole philosophy works well here.” See One, Do One, Teach One is a much-used training strategy in the medical profession, particularly for surgical procedures. Aspiring surgeons observe a procedure, then operate themselves and, finally, create and present a report based on what they did – in essence, they teach it.

### **Train Thyself?**

Sales trainers often start their careers as salespeople, but for many sales managers, the idea of getting the sales force to train itself may seem far-fetched. Not so, according to Nalley. “Training is selling,” he says. “Take that *Selling Power* article. You can read that article, and you can pick up some points out of it. In taking that article, breaking it down, doing research on it and teaching it to others, you learn a lot more about selling.”

For example, CCI’s search consultants learn how to do the kind of fact-finding necessary to prepare for sales calls. They learn how to build creative and persuasive presentations, and they get a chance to stand before a group and polish their speaking skills. Last, but hardly least, as they successfully train others, they build their own confidence levels.

“Do you think Neil [Kelleter] learned more about value-added selling by giving the presentation and researching it than he would have if I had been up there presenting it?” asks Nalley. “Absolutely, because he takes ownership of it. The individual takes ownership of every single subject that is being presented. They learn it. And when they learn it, it comes out, and the

passion comes out when they are presenting it.”

Further, the sales team at CCI seems to learn better from their peers. “I could run around the office screaming ‘Value added!’ and people would think it means we have got to get a higher fee,” says Nalley. “But Bob Smith is more apt to listen to Neil who is in a similar position. He supports Neil. If every single Wednesday, it’s me or Ron or Beth or David lecturing, there is no ownership in it. We are not building the team approach. We believe in teamwork.”

It is obvious from sitting in on one MEGA-Bite™ session that it is an effective team-building technique. The rest of the sales team plays a surprisingly active role in Kelleter’s training session. They listen closely, are ready to participate and enthusiastically support their colleague. They know that in a coming week, they will be standing in his place. Further, when the session is over, they know they can reach out to each other as well as their manager for support and skills.

### **The Payoff at CCI**

Frechette’s first experience with an executive recruiter was a big disappointment. He was changing jobs and visited a recruiter in Orlando, FL. At the conclusion of his interview, the plainly uninterested recruiter offered this sole piece of wisdom: “Keep reading the classifieds.”

Today, MEGA-Bite™ Training is helping Frechette build the kind of executive search firm he expected to find when he went to Orlando. “Someone once said to me that a recruiter is perceived as somewhere between a used-car salesman and a telemarketer,” says Frechette. “But that is not Career Coaches. We take a totally different approach; we take an extra few minutes. We do diagnosis, and we give coaching advice. Our mission is to lead people to success. It’s what I call ‘I Care Recruiting.’”

“This is a tough, tough job to do well, because you are working on so many different levels,” he continues. “You have to sell a company on utilizing your service and get a fee agreement signed. That is the first hurdle. Now, you have got to sell a district sales manager or a VP of Sales on giving you an assignment. That is the second sale. The next step now is to go out and sell the candidates on the opportunity, so they can say, ‘I am interested, and I will take a look at this.’ And then you have to sell the candidate to the client and help the candidate sell himself or herself. There are all these different selling environments that you have to be able to work through in order to increase your percentage of success in our industry. MEGA-Bite™ Training is helping our team to do it right.”

– THEODORE KINNI