



High-Growth Pharmaceutical Division Revolutionizes Sales Coaching and Performance

Introduction

On the heels of a remarkable sales increase in the previous year, a leading pharmaceutical division set an equally ambitious goal of 42% additional growth for the current year. This challenging target raised a critical question: How could they accomplish such substantial improvement without fundamentally changing their approach?

The leader of the sales division understood that consistent coaching approaches are essential for maintaining high performance. As markets become more challenging and growth targets more ambitious, organizations need standardized methods to develop talent, ensure accountability, and drive sustainable market success.

After seeing PDG's proven success in several of the company's other divisions, the unit's leadership engaged PDG to implement a structured coaching framework that would align their teams and drive consistent performance improvements.

Challenge

To achieve their ambitious growth targets, the division's sales unit needed to overcome several significant obstacles that were preventing optimal performance across their division:

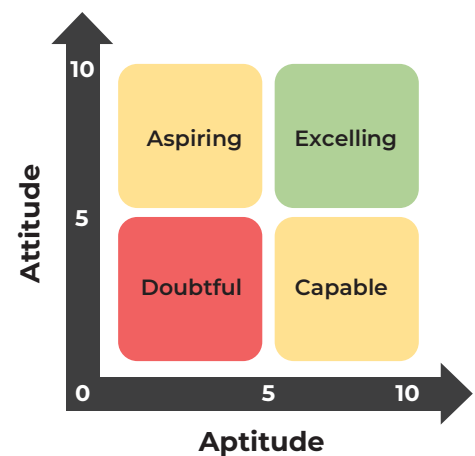
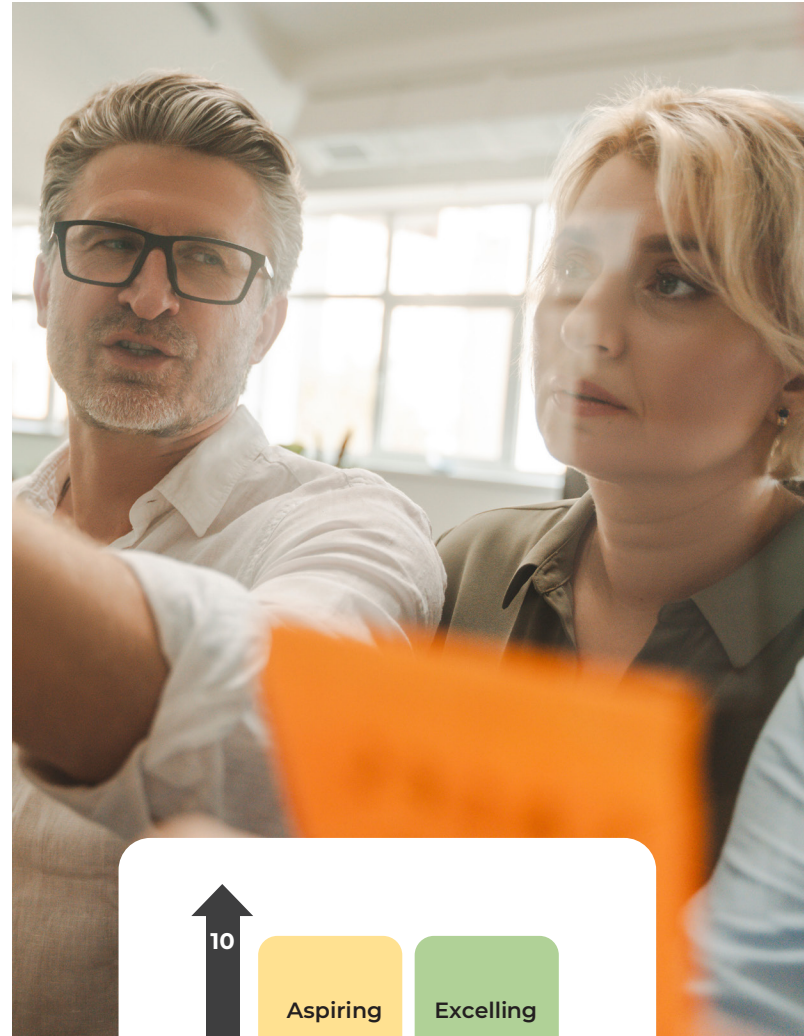
1. **Ambitious Growth Targets:** Building on the performance increase achieved in the previous year, leadership's goal of repeating same level of growth demanded a fundamentally different approach to coaching and development.
2. **Workforce Complexity:** Following an acquisition, approximately 30% of the field force was new to the brand. The team needed to effectively integrate these new hires while maintaining momentum among tenured sales reps, bridging significant disparities in experience and product knowledge.
3. **Coaching Inconsistency:** Without a standardized coaching model, managers approached development differently, creating uneven results across teams and hindering overall performance.
4. **Accountability Gaps:** There was no consistent mechanism to identify struggling performers early or to measure the effectiveness of coaching interventions, making it difficult to ensure all managers were having necessary performance conversations.
5. **Competitive Pressure:** The division faced strong head-to-head competition from established brands. Reps needed sharper messaging and stronger skills to differentiate in a crowded market, making effective coaching and rapid skill development essential.

These interconnected challenges required a fresh approach—one that would provide real-time insights into employee aptitude and attitude while guiding targeted interventions to maximize growth.

Solution

To address these challenges, PDG was engaged to implement the Performance Matrix—its highly-effective data-driven framework designed to assess and categorize employees based on their attitude and aptitude. By mapping individuals into four distinct quadrants—Aspiring, Excelling, Capable, and Doubtful—leadership could make informed decisions about targeted development, support, and resource allocation.

A fundamental strength of the Performance Matrix is its ability to establish a unified coaching framework across an entire division or organization. By implementing a consistent assessment methodology, shared terminology, and standardized coaching approach, the division eliminated the



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The Performance Matrix serves two key functions:

- 1) to accurately assess where employees are positioned in the matrix, and
- 2) to guide appropriate coaching interventions

For those in lower quadrants, the focus is on moving them “up, over, or out” through what PDG calls “dot conversations.” During these structured dialogues, leaders discuss the sales representative’s specific position on the matrix and collaborate on targeted improvement plans. For reps in upper quadrants, the system provides opportunities for advanced coaching to further refine their skills and maximize their potential.

This consistent approach creates a common language around performance that resonates throughout the division while ensuring all employees receive appropriate development based on their specific needs.

The implementation included:

- A full day launch workshop in February 2024, where all five leaders plotted their 586 direct reports on the matrix for the first time
- Four targeted 90-minute virtual coaching sessions focused on addressing each quadrant’s specific needs
- One-on-one coaching for all five Regional Business Directors (RBDs) and the Vice President of the division
- Regular plotting points to measure progress (February, August, and October 2024)

The Performance Matrix provided a clear visual representation of workforce dynamics, identifying employees who needed additional support, those ready to advance, and those at risk of underperformance. This standardized coaching approach ensured that all employees received consistent guidance and development opportunities, eliminating the disparities that had previously hindered progress.

LEADERSHIP MINDSET SHIFT

A significant outcome of the solution was the shift in leadership mindset—from leaders seeing themselves as directly responsible for *driving the business* to understanding their primary role as *developing their people*, who would in turn drive the business. This profound shift, reinforced through the Performance Matrix methodology, helped revolutionize how managers approached their teams.

Results

The implementation of the Performance Matrix yielded significant results over an eight-month period:

- The percentage of employees categorized as “Excelling” grew from 66% in February to 71% in October 2024.
- The “Doubtful” category saw a reduction from 5% to 4%, demonstrating a positive shift in employee attitude and capability.
- A 4% reduction in below-the-line reps (from 15% to 11% - Feb. to Oct.) demonstrated positive workforce transformation through targeted coaching interventions.

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- The “Capable” quadrant showed improvement, with employees successfully transitioning from 10% to 7% of the workforce into the “Aspiring” or “Excelling” quadrants.
- The 24 employees in the “Doubtful” quadrant (as of October 2024) represents approximately \$6M in annual salary investment (~\$250,000 per rep), highlighting the significant financial impact of continuously addressing underperformance through effective coaching or appropriate transitions to new roles.

Perhaps most importantly, the division established a consistent language and approach to performance management that aligned with their aggressive growth targets. Leaders at all levels now had a structured way to have meaningful development conversations with their teams.

Future Work

With these results, the company is looking to refine and expand the Performance Matrix model. The program has demonstrated such value that other divisions within the

organization have already adopted it and further expansion into additional divisions is on the horizon.

Future initiatives within this division may include:

- Further integration of the Performance Matrix with existing coaching systems
- Deeper analysis to understand movement between quadrants
- Expanded one-on-one coaching for Area Business Managers (ABMs)
- Development of more targeted interventions for specific performance personas

By adopting this data-driven, strategic approach to performance management, the company has not only made progress toward its ambitious growth targets but also laid the foundation for ongoing success in an increasingly competitive industry.

Learn More About the Performance Matrix and PDG's Approach to Sustainable Behavior Change

At Performance Development Group (PDG), we specialize in helping life sciences organizations achieve lasting business impact through sustained behavior change. Our proprietary Performance Matrix is a powerful tool that enables sales leaders to assess team members based on both attitude and aptitude, providing a clear framework for targeted coaching and development.

By identifying where individuals fall within the Performance Matrix, leaders can tailor their approach to address specific needs, bridging the gap between knowing and doing. This method ensures that training

translates into real-world application, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and accountability.

Our solutions encompass a range of services, including Product Launch Excellence, HCP Engagement, MSL-KOL Engagement, Key Account Management, Competitive Selling, and Performance Coaching. Each is designed to drive behavior change that leads to measurable business outcomes.

To explore how PDG can support your team's transformation visit our website at [performdev.com](https://www.performdev.com).

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