

Energy to the human capital of the sales networks

Evolving trends in the human capital development programs for the commercial networks

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The increasing competitiveness of the Energy & Utilities sector requires an effective, proactive and professional commercial approach to the market. Appropriately addressing the organizational behaviours of the commercial networks is crucial not only for the achievement of the defined quantitative targets, but also to ensure the quality of the relationship with the Customers which in turn broadly affects the same image of the brand. Strengthening the relationship with customers is in fact at the top of the agenda of the Italian business leaders, as shown by the 15th PwC Global CEO Survey (<http://www.pwc.com/it/it/publications/15th-ceosurvey-italy.jhtml>).

In view of the above, it is important to invest consistently on skills development programs for the resources that make up the sales networks, whether direct or indirect, and address their behaviour towards defined models (“role model”).

The skills to address and develop during these programs are very different if we compare B2B and B2C vendors. In B2B, for example, the ability of preliminary analysis of the target, listening and interpreting the context, strongly affects the performance, while in B2C being pro-active and capable of resisting the “refusal” stress are far more important.

In Italy, already in the years 2007-2008, some of the main Energy players launched significant programs for the recruitment, training and development of the human capital of the commercial networks, with predominant focus on B2B.

Nowadays though, the general and ever-growing attention to the consumer world poses new challenges for the Energy companies addressing this segment, mostly through indirect networks.

In this scenario, today in Italy in the Energy sector we can observe a phenomenon similar to the one which characterized the Telecom sector 7 or 8 years ago, when the human resources development programs for the commercial networks in some cases represented a meeting point between “parent companies” and “self-employed agents” united by the same basic goals: selling more and better.

It is worth noting that these programs tend gradually to overcome the traditional “training - learning assessment” scheme and have elements of similarity with the loyalty programs whose rules for participation are gradually becoming more sophisticated, affecting the vendors’ status, both in terms of quantity and quality.

When presenting these features, the relevant programs are also referred to as “certification of competence” (cfr. [Figure](#)) and are carried out through an integrated system of assessments for understanding the compliance of each vendor with a reference model. In these programs, certified vendors can enjoy specific tangible and intangible benefits, and their existence generates emulative behaviours.

In the certification programs involving vendors, for example, the key skills for successful sales (pro-activity, listening skills, and so on) are highlighted / sought after together with the knowledge of the offering and the code of business conduct.

In terms of prospective scenarios it is reasonable to assume that among Energy & Utilities players, those who will be able to devise the most creative and reliable programs for the development of the human capital of the commercial networks, will achieve the largest competitive advantage.

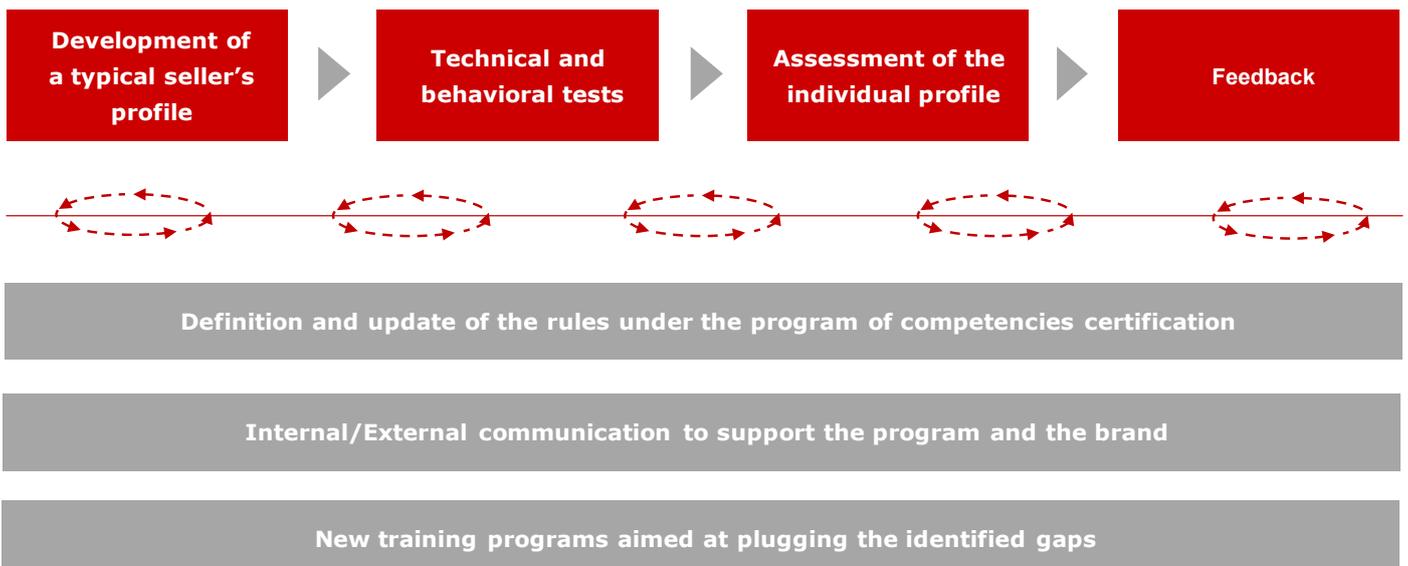
In Italy, PwC has recently developed this type of programs to support the companies active in the Telecommunications,

Financial Services and Energy & Utilities sectors, assessing their main advantages in the field. In particular, we observed that in B2B these programs have been an important tool in order to attract, retain, motivate and enhance the profitability of the best vendors, and in the case of B2C they have been a

strategic leverage for attracting and managing the best indirect sales structures.

In the future, and with particular reference to the Energy sector, it is reasonable to assume that the programs described above - suitably adapted - will be extended to other

front-end resources (e.g. Call Centres - Support Desks) because, as highlighted by the magazine Il Mondo (13 July 2012), “the shake comes from competition ... those who will be able to provide services and keep customers, will win”.





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