

CASE STUDY

Cisco Direct Sales Reps, Distributor Partners Learn SaaS-Specific Sales Skills with Janek Training

Summary

Cisco is a worldwide leader in the field of computer and networking hardware and has in recent years expanded their portfolio by offering software solutions. The organization sought a training partner to help their global sales team and distributor partners effectively transition from primarily selling hardware to also selling software solutions.

After a thorough discovery and research phase, Janek created a wholly customized sales performance solution to provide Cisco's sales teams with SaaS-specific selling skills delivered during multiple sales training workshops on three continents. Training sustainment was achieved by enabling Cisco's managers with the coaching tools to reinforce the skills, knowledge, and abilities acquired during the training.

About Cisco Systems

Cisco Systems, Inc. is a multinational technology firm based in San Jose, California, founded in 1984 by Stanford University computer scientists who pioneered the local area network (LAN). The company went public in 1990 and is currently traded on the Dow Jones, S&P 500, and Nasdaq Index. Currently, they have approximately 75,900 employees and generate \$51.9 billion in annual revenue (both 2019 numbers).

The company has IT products and services in networking, security, collaboration, data center, and the Internet of Things. Three primary markets are the clientele focus – Enterprise, Service Provider, and Mid-Small Businesses.

The Challenge

Historically, Cisco has been primarily a hardware firm. But then, starting in 2007 with the acquisition of IronPort, an email security firm, the company began expanding into the arena of subscription-based software services. While this proved an excellent diversification and added additional revenue streams, Cisco leadership found that their sales team used the same selling tactics and strategies for software subscriptions that they used for hardware products. Consequently, the sales organization struggled with selling software.

To remedy this, Cisco looked for a partner who could not only teach the sales skills for SaaS, but how to sell to those target markets, who often differed from the hardware product markets the sales force was familiar with (though some overlap did exist).

The Solution

Upon selection, Janek gained a thorough and complete understanding of Cisco's Hybrid Cloud SaaS-related services, markets, processes, and business situation. Part of the research involved leveraging Cisco's SaaS product specialists to gain total fluency in service features and benefits.

Armed with this knowledge, Janek created a completely customized Critical Selling Skills program that emphasized use cases, the unique elements of SaaS discovery, and how to present SaaS solutions to the target markets. Two separate versions of the program were designed – one for Cisco's direct sales representatives and one for Cisco's licensed distributor partners.

In total, six workshops capped at 30 participants each were conducted across three continents – with sessions held in San Jose, CA; Irvine, CA; London, United Kingdom; and Sydney, Australia. Reinforcement was provided through customized coaching tools that were delivered to managers, who were also trained in how to use those tools to coach to and reinforce the skills, knowledge, and abilities taught in the CSS workshop.

The Results

The training was well-received by all stakeholders – the direct sales reps, the licensed distributor partners, and the managers. Participants cited the customization, relevancy, and applicability of the learned material as particular high points.

Cisco's leadership considered the training to be such a success that they opted to build the curriculum into their formal onboarding process for new hires.

This initiative accomplished its goals in equipping both the direct sales force and licensed distributor partners with the knowledge and skills to uncover SaaS client needs in discovery, connect solutions to needs, and build rapport in the language and communication style that SaaS markets prefer.

We want to learn about your specific sales challenges.

Contact us to see how we can help your organization achieve its sales performance goals.

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