

*“Evolve or die. That was the choice we faced.”*

—Kirk Kimler, former president,  
Fisher HealthCare, Division of ThermoFisher Scientific, Inc.

## THE SITUATION

The executive team of Fisher HealthCare realized they were at a crossroads: continue business as usual slowly losing market share and profitability or reorient and reinvigorate the business strategy. After thoroughly analyzing target market segments and developing a detailed strategic business plan to drive market share growth and operating income targets executives were faced with implementing much of the plan through what they considered a mediocre sales force, at best. The sales force, however, considered itself seasoned and successful, having many years experience. They did not initially share the same sense of urgency to change business and sales practices. Most sales people were hitting their current performance targets and many had achieved their best results year ever. The new strategic business plan, however, called for a dramatic and urgent shift in sales strategy and tactics. In particular, the sales force needed to shift from a largely transactional, commodity-oriented sale to a solution sale, which included the company's traditional commodity-type products and added a new suite of higher margin capital equipment, specialty products, and optional services. Executive management had serious concerns that its sales force would or could make the necessary changes to execute on the new plan.

## THE SOLUTION

AchieveForum designed a comprehensive, 18-month sales skill learning system, explicitly linking the development of consultative selling skills and processes to Fisher's new business strategy, and which addressed the entire sales organization, from top management down through territory sales reps. Phase I immersed senior leaders in an intensive 2-day workshop to align them with their new business strategy, and engaged them in shaping the rollout of the sales learning system. Phase II communicated the sales strategy developed by the senior leaders to the district sales managers, and engaged them in an interactive workshop to develop effective coaching skills. Phase III involved line sales reps in learning and practicing consultative selling skills while their sales managers observed and coached them. The sales manager participation in the workshops with their reps increased the impact for everyone. Sales reps received intensive feedback, sales managers practiced their coaching skills (as well as received feedback from AchieveForum facilitators), and sales managers and their teams began to establish new behavior patterns with each other. Later, Phases IV and V addressed additional selling skills including negotiations, senior level selling, and key account management. AchieveForum established a small, dedicated faculty who were able to increase the relevance and impact of the workshops because they understood the client business strategy and culture so well.

## THE IMPACT

District sales managers very quickly bought into the business strategy and the learning system designed to help them implement the strategy. Managers displayed high energy and engagement in the sales skill workshops, and followed through on their field assignment to observe, coach, and support the sales people as they applied new selling skills. Very early in the roll out of the learning system customers and sales people both began to report unsolicited that skillful, customer-focused use of questions by Fisher sales people was helping customers better understand their own issues and uncovering important customer business needs and new selling opportunities.

From 2003 to the end of 2006 Fisher Health Care operating income increased 80%, greatly surpassing expectations for this key business metric. The sponsoring executive was promoted twice: first from VP Marketing to President of Fisher HealthCare division, and later promoted and assigned to lead a group of companies in another part of the business. mortgage and lending market.

### About AchieveForum:

AchieveForum delivers leadership solutions that are designed for the customer and are built on more than 85 years of global experience. For more information, go to: [www.achieveforum.com](http://www.achieveforum.com)

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