

Excellence in Practice 2018

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GOLD

DSM and Vlerick Business School

The journey to excellence

How building the capabilities of DSM's marketing and sales teams creates successful growth.

In 2010, Royal DSM embarked on a journey – one that would reposition it as a global life sciences and material sciences company. This shift from transactional chemical supplier to strategic partner organisation came with ambitious targets. To achieve them, the company needed a world-class marketing and sales approach. And its marketing and sales teams – which had traditionally played a transactional role – needed to focus on customers and relationship building.

In a bid to upskill its sales and marketing teams, DSM introduced a series of training initiatives with various providers. But it quickly realised that to develop a culture of continual professional development, it needed a more joined-up and bespoke approach. So it turned to Vlerick Business School.

Building a partnership

Vlerick's world-class B2B expertise and global reputation for customised programmes made it the perfect partner for DSM. From the start, both organisations worked to establish a collaborative, equal partnership that made the most of their joint expertise – and brought together a highly experienced project team.

Over a period of five years, this team built a sustainable, effective learning journey that took DSM's sales and marketing capability to a completely new level. Rather than set out and implement a rigid plan, it took a more agile approach – starting small, building momentum and expanding the programme incrementally. This allowed it to gather feedback, test materials and build trust – and expand its reach year by year.

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Our faculty were delighted to work with a partner who challenges our thinking, contributes real-life cases and is open to collaboration.

Marion Debruyne
Dean, Vlerick Business School

Stage 1: Bringing people on board

The team's first objective was to get senior marketing and sales professionals interested in and excited about learning and development. It created a series of webinars that explored the latest trends in B2B marketing and sales – such as strategic marketing planning and value pricing – as well as best practice from across the industry. The webinars were combined with an optional one-day master class for experienced professionals.

The aims of the webinars and master class were to give marketing and sales teams the latest insights – and to start building a shared understanding. But they also served as a launchpad for a more formal learning platform.

The materials fired the curiosity of even the most experienced team members – who began to ask how they could find out more. It became clear that there was a need – and appetite – for further learning initiatives within the marketing and sales teams.





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153%

Together, DSM and Vlerick have created a sustainable learning journey that has transformed the marketing and sales function: brand value has increased by 153%

Stage 2: Building a knowledge hub

The team then began to develop an online portal to house all DSM's marketing and sales learning materials, research and insights from across the profession and examples of best practice.

Vlerick and DSM created a suite of highly relevant, interactive training modules packed with real-life examples from within the company. Each module was approved by a senior review team before it was added to the portal.

These modules – along with webinars, articles and videos – form an invaluable library of resources. And the materials are stored in three training levels that marketing and sales professionals from all levels can access:

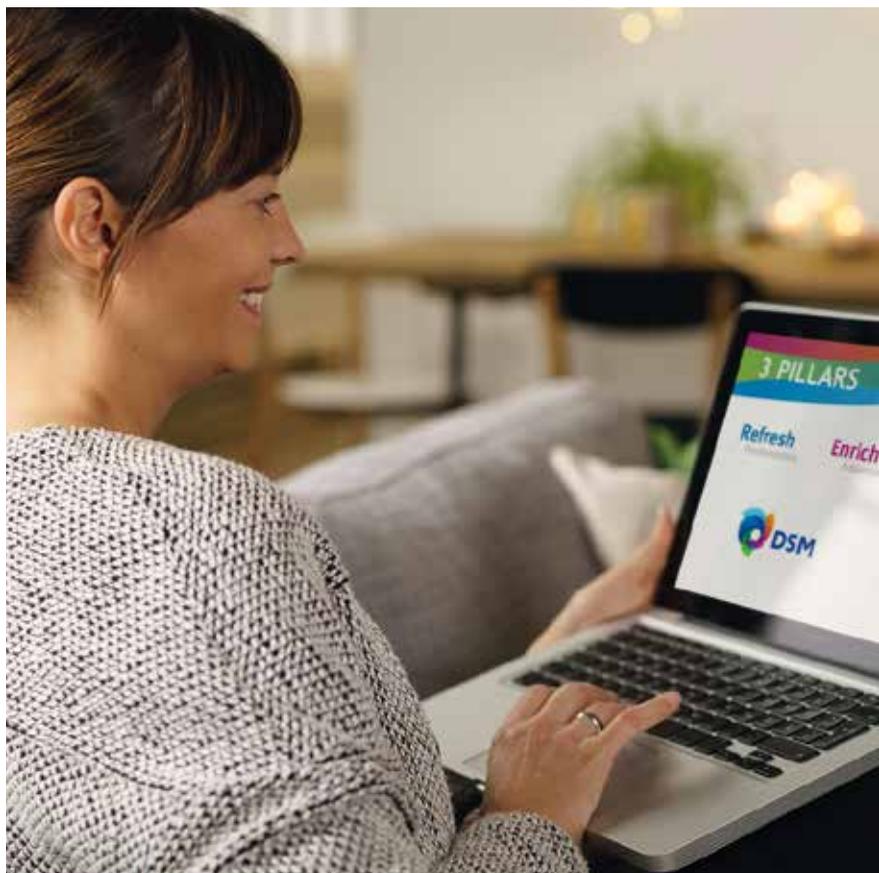
- Refresh is for new team members – or employees with limited experience. It gives them a great foundation in the fundamentals of both sales and marketing.
- Enrich is designed to share the latest theories, ideas and practices with more experienced professionals.
- Excel offers DSM's senior leaders advanced webinars and courses to take their skills and knowledge even further.

DSM employees can access the portal at any time – and it's regularly updated with the latest industry news and trends as well as highly relevant modules and webinars. Because it is fully customised, it gives teams a shared understanding of the company's terminology and processes. They speak the same language, use the same processes and work towards shared objectives.

The portal is an essential element of DSM's learning and development – and has been a vital step on its journey towards customer-centricity.

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DSM's NPS has increased by 10





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The Vlerick DSM B2B Marketing & Sales Programme delivered 110%... It was refreshing to focus on marketing and sales best practice in such a collaborative and informative space.

Tara Armstrong
Senior Digital Marketing Manager, DSM

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Vlerick practise what they preach. I am proud that we co-created a frontrunner capability development programme that will attract and develop Marketing & Sales talent.

Arthur Simonetti
Global Marketing Director, DSM

Stage 3: Developing future leaders

DSM needed marketing and sales professionals who could help the organisation achieve its goals. So as well as building skills and knowledge via the online programme, the team needed to find a way to identify potential leaders and accelerate career progression.

Vlerick and DSM designed and launched an invitation-only accreditation programme for professionals who are ready to move up in the organisation. There are two pathways depending on how much experience an individual has – M&SP1 and M&SP2.

After an initial interview to discuss their ambitions, participants follow a 10-week online learning journey and take an online test. If they pass it, they then join a three-day customised programme at Vlerick.

This is a hands-on, intensive experience designed to help individuals upskill and earn a promotion. Because participants have already learned the theory online, Vlerick adopts a flipped classroom approach – using face-to-face class time to apply the theory to real, highly relevant business situations.

Once M&SP1 and M&SP2 participants complete the programme and get accredited they are in a strong position to be promoted when senior roles open up within DSM. In the future, the company plans to make the accreditation programme a formal part of the promotion process.

A recipe for success

Together, DSM and Vlerick have created a sustainable learning journey that has transformed the marketing and sales function. And the numbers are remarkable:

- Brand value has increased by 153%
- DSM's Net Promoter Score (NPS) has increased by 10

M&SP1 and M&SP2 participants who've been certified are more than three times more likely to get a promotion than their colleagues

Even more importantly, marketing and sales teams have fully embraced the idea of continual learning and development. The learning portal is considered an invaluable tool – individuals continue to log on and learn online and other teams can now access the portal too. And M&SP1 and M&SP2 participants highly recommend the programmes to their colleagues – and rate the faculty highly.

DSM is now planning to open up the programme to other areas of the business – so this successful partnership looks set to continue well into the future.

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