Once bitten, twice shy

Overcoming a slow start with the wrong provider to become a leader in online social selling
Overview

Would Sales for Life’s online “social selling” training business be first out of the gate? In spite of escalating demand, no other company offered anything like it—yet. But, like all online propositions, so much depended on their learning platform provider.

The small company they hired for their platform was getting nowhere, giving the competition a chance to catch up. It became obvious that they must switch providers or miss the advantage of being “first to market.” Yet there was more to it than simply choosing another company—they also had to be trained to use the new platform. They needed a partner that could deliver quickly and help them conquer the learning curve just as fast. They needed D2L and the Brightspace platform.

AT A GLANCE

Client Sales for Life
Learners 40,000+
Level Professional
Solutions Brightspace Field and Channel Enablement solution

CHALLENGE

• Launch business as quickly as possible
• Find a provider able to support business goals
• Ensure support for clients
• Acquire credibility needed for large client opportunities
• Implement a scalable solution

SOLUTION

• Secure immediate access to Brightspace platform
• Deploy well-organized, thorough training
• Add assistance from a dedicated business manager
• Ensure reliable 24/7 support

RESULT

• Thousands of new users in less than a year
• Several Fortune 500 clients and proposals to large enterprises
• Launch of public enrollment within first year
• Double the previous year’s training revenues

1At results provided by Sales for Life
SALES FOR LIFE IDEA: SOCIAL MEDIA SALES TRAINING
George Albert and his partner Jamie Shanks were running a recruiting business when they became aware of a yawning gap in the marketplace. They realized that companies of all sizes were being left behind as the world shifts from traditional sales techniques like cold calls to the less invasive methods of social media selling. So they changed direction and focused on training.

“We teach that buyers buy on their own terms and that social media adds value to them along their buying journey. By adding value to your potential buyer, you increase your chances of being the chosen provider,” says Albert, Managing Partner of Sales for Life.

WITH THE WRONG PARTNER, THE OPPORTUNITY WAS SLIPPING AWAY
They set out to find a learning partner. After investigating several options, they initially decided against D2L—and soon realized it was a mistake. “We chose a smaller provider because they were friends of the business,” says Albert. “We thought they would be more nimble and that we would have a more intimate relationship, but it was an implementation nightmare.”

After eight weeks it was time to launch their training products and they had nothing to show for their investment. He realized it was time to cut their losses: “I looked at my business partner and said, ‘listen we made a mistake, it’s cost us money but we need to make a change now.’”

Albert explains, “A small provider is cheaper, but you get what you pay for in life. We were building an entire company around this platform, and we needed a provider that could serve our needs and be there for us.”

What’s more, they realized that a larger company like D2L would be better able to handle their global expansion plan. The current provider just wasn’t big enough.

THE LEARNING CURVE WAS STEEP
Technology is only ever half the equation—the staff behind the scenes needs to be prepared to use it. Albert and Shanks had no experience whatsoever.

“It was like I was going into a foreign country without knowing the language,” says Albert. “I knew nothing about learning management systems, I knew nothing about SCORM. We had to learn everything from scratch.”
“Having a scalable solution and being first to market helped us capture market share. With Brightspace, our learning curve was faster, the implementation process was smooth and the tool was way more intuitive. D2L also offers great support 24/7. All of this freed up our time and allowed our success to happen.”

George Albert, Managing Partner
Sales for Life
SALES FOR LIFE SWITCHED TO BRIGHTSPACE
In the initial decision-making process, Albert built a relationship with a corporate sales rep at D2L. When their first choice failed to live up to expectations, they wanted to give her a shot. “She was very helpful and we had a great rapport, so switching to Brightspace was easy,” he explained.

The size and structure of the company was also appealing. They were confident D2L could handle their plans to grow the business.

A FAST START AND THE SUPPORT THEY NEEDED
The great surprise for Albert and Shanks was that they could get started immediately. “As soon as I signed the agreement I had access to the platform. I told them I needed to be live right away, and that’s what I got,” says Albert.

Almost instantly, they began learning how to operate the platform: “D2L put me through a really strong implementation process. You meet with the trainer and an agenda is all laid out, then you’re introduced to support, and you learn how you’ll be supported. Along the way, they make sure you have all the information you need. The experience was amazing.”

DEDICATED SERVICE KEEPS BUSINESS RUNNING SMOOTHLY
Once the business was up and running, Albert and Shanks needed reassurance that technical issues wouldn’t get in the way of their continuing success. They needed support they could rely on.

Says Albert, “We’re not from this industry and we don’t have the resources internally to handle support. We need someone to lean on and that someone is D2L. If I have an issue I just email our dedicated account manager and he organizes the necessary resources to address my concerns. It works very well.”

THE SALES ADVANTAGE OF THE BRIGHTSPACE PLATFORM
Beyond the practical aspects of using Brightspace, they discovered that reputation matters. Clients sometimes request information about which provider Sales for Life will be using to build their courses: “When I tell them we’re with D2L, they know who it is and that helps with the comfort level.”

Their relationship with D2L is evolving along with their success. It turns out that the things that Albert and Shanks have come to appreciate about working with D2L—speed, experience and service—are the things their clients appreciate, too.

“We have plans to outsource all our LMS support issues to D2L’s support team,” he says. “That will eliminate us as the middle man for our clients who have troubleshooting needs. We’re leading the way in social selling, but D2L has the world class LMS service our clients deserve, so we decided to let them lead the way in support.”
Result

MORE THAN BEING FIRST, SALES FOR LIFE IS THE LEADER
With a speedy implementation and thorough training, Sales for Life managed to achieve the coveted spot of “first to market.” In the fast-paced world of social media, it was a coup.

“The Brightspace platform allowed us to be first to market with a comprehensive, scalable social selling training program,” says Albert. “I told them my situation and within two days of signing I had access to my own customized platform. Very quickly we were able to gain visibility with the largest enterprise clients in North America.”

BUSINESS IS GROWING BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS
In the first year since switching to Brightspace, Sales for Life signed up several new clients with needs for thousands of course seats. They’ve also attracted the attention of enterprise clients.

“Companies want their reps to be more social media-savvy, and we are the brand they turn to,” says Albert. “Once we show them the capabilities of our curriculum and the scalability of our platform, it’s a no brainer.”

THE FUTURE KEEPS GETTING BRIGHTER
In the coming months, Sales for Life will launch their public enrollment program for non-corporate client sales reps—they will also roll out large training programs to some of their Fortune 500 enterprise clients, adding several thousand learners to their platform. What’s more, they’re planning to launch a completely overhauled version of their social selling course.

In the beginning, Albert and Shanks knew nothing about learning management systems. Since launching with Brightspace, they’ve doubled their revenues. “And we will most likely double and triple those moving forward from today, just by having the right people on our team, a solution that meets a market need, the right delivery tools, and the right support for our clients.”

2 All results provided by Sales for Life
About D2L

D2L is the software leader that makes the learning experience better. The company’s cloud-based platform—Brightspace—is not a common one-size-fits-all learning management system (LMS). It’s easier to use, more flexible, and smart. With Brightspace, you can personalize the experience for every learner to deliver real results. The company is also a world leader in learning analytics: its platform predicts learner performance so that you can take action in real time to keep them on track. Brightspace is used by learners in higher education, K–12, and the enterprise sector, including the Fortune 1000. D2L has operations in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, Brazil, and Singapore. | www.brightspace.com

CONTACT US

Phone: 1-519-772-0325 (Worldwide)
Toll Free: 1-888-772-0325 (North America)
0-808-234-4235 (United Kingdom and Europe)
0-800-452-069 (New Zealand)
1-800-656-210 (Australia)
0-800-891-4507 (Brazil)
Fax: 1-519-772-0324
Email: info@brightspace.com
Twitter: @Brightspace
Web: www.brightspace.com | www.D2L.com