



AUTO SIMULATION LETS SALES TEAM WALK IN DEALER'S SHOES

CHALLENGE

Cox Enterprises' revenue was driven primarily by the automotive industry. There were two vertical divisions (AutoTrader.com and Manheim) with an exclusive focus on the automotive industry and several key media divisions (Television, Newspaper, Radio, Cable) that garnered large shares of automotive advertising spending. Sr. leadership called an Automotive Summit with leaders from each division as well as customers and automotive industry consultants. One of the needs identified at this meeting as well as a subsequent meeting with corporate leaders was the need for automotive industry training to help teach Cox Enterprises' sales representatives to function more as consultants for Automotive Dealer customers. Corporate Marketing was assigned the task of developing a training program that could meet the needs of all divisions and leverage tribal knowledge that existed within the company, while also building a program that provided a more robust learning opportunity than just classroom-style learning.

ACTIONS

- Identified existing training programs already established by some divisions in the company and audited these courses to determine if they might fit the training and learning needs of other divisions.
- Hosted a meeting with a small team of cross divisional sales leaders to further identify learning needs through a variety of breakout team exercises.
- Identified key internal contacts with experience in running dealerships at the GM or department head level to provide input on training program.
- Engaged Corporate HR Development team to assist in identifying learning needs.
- Identified a vendor (BTS) that specialized in the development of experiential learning programs such computer simulations. This vendor had already built a simulation for a large automotive dealer to train their GMs to better manage dealerships.
- In conjunction with HR, engaged the vendor to adapt the training program for Cox Enterprises to allow teams to compete in running a simulated dealership. Each team member would make decisions about their department of the dealership.
- Built the simulation as a standard program to work across all divisions, while allowing each division to build classroom modules specific to their division.
- Engaged another vendor to develop classroom training module specific to CEI Media Divisions.
- "Piloted" simulation prior to launch to gather feedback and enhance the experience.
- Named the program "The Dealer Experience" and launched it to a cross-divisional team to leverage industry knowledge across the enterprise.

RESULTS

- The program consistently scored a 9.5 out of 10 among attendees and 99% said they would recommend the "Dealer Experience" training program to peers.
- Feedback showed sales reps were able to "change the conversation" with their dealer clients to be more focused on the dealer's business challenges and not Cox products and product jargon.
- Anecdotal evidence showed that the change in conversation allowed sales reps to close more business. Annual incremental revenues were estimated to be \$500-\$750K.