

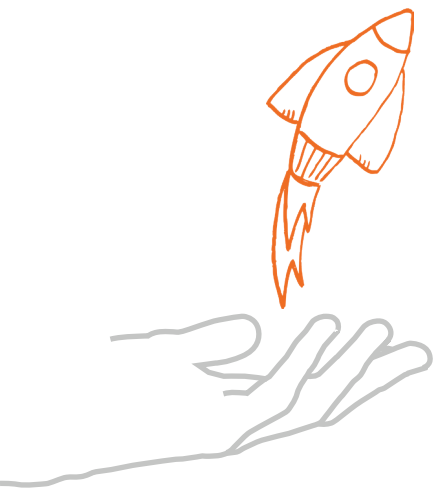
# Global Sales Transformation During a Pandemic



With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic reaching far and wide, many organisations are facing the urgent challenge of rapidly needing to bring their face-to-face training programmes into the digital world, whether through eLearning, virtual classrooms, or other digitally-enabled solutions. We have worked with our client, GfK (one of the global leaders in data provision) to deliver a re-designed approach which maintains momentum towards GfK's strategic goals.

Sales  DNA





## Background

GfK is undergoing a global transformation, evolving its offering and moving towards a subscription model. This necessitates a significant change in the mindsets, skills and behaviours of the global salesforce. Identical shifts are essential in sales leaders, so that they became integral to the driving of the new strategy.

In late 2019 GfK, with Transform Performance International (TPI) as its selected partner, undertook an assessment of competencies and mindsets of the sales organisation to provide a tailored '2020 Roadmap' in support of the strategic objectives. TPI's experience in process, competency and mindset data analytics provided senior leaders with a wealth of data upon which to build the change programme. The global programme formulated after the exercise was designed to be in-region, face-to-face, and spanning the full year. We anticipated a large train-the-trainer element, delivering from geographical 'hubs' to c450 sales colleagues from 55 countries – individual contributors, sales leaders and many senior leaders. The programme was named GfK Sales DNA and planned subject matter included:

- Leaders - Transformational Coaching, Leading Through Change, and Building World-Class Teams
- Salespeople – Client Engagement Mastery, Negotiation for Win:Win and Fast Prospecting Results

## Urgent: agreeing a new programme with leaders and stakeholders

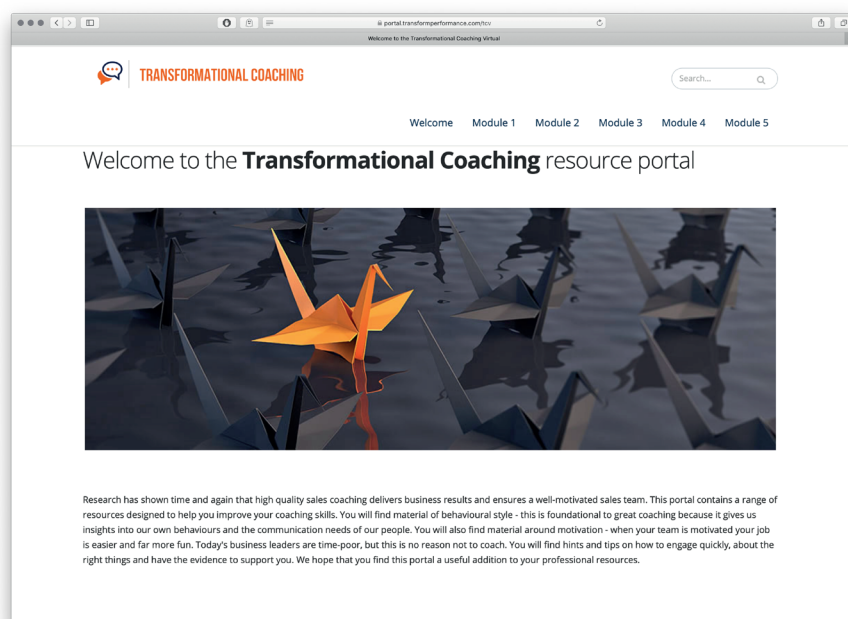
On an auspicious date, Friday 13th March, Covid-19 lockdown began in Nuremberg, Germany. A TPI facilitator was thirty minutes into delivering a pilot session of the wider content when the regional president halted proceedings with a very clear, "Everybody out!"

Given the strategic importance to develop GfK commercial

skills and culture while going through a major transition, waiting for a return to business as usual was not an option. The face-to-face element of the programme was always going to be supported digitally as a blended approach, but the Covid situation forced a dramatic rethink. It represented an opportunity to try things in a new way, using new tools and techniques.

Within two weeks, GfK's Chief Commercial Officer gave the green light to 'changing the direction of the tanker' and taking the entire 2020 programme virtual. Within 6 weeks TPI and the GfK Learning team had collaborated to achieve the following:

- Postponed regional kick-offs and replaced them with Winning from Home (WFH) virtual sessions, where participants shared how they were engaging with clients in this new situation and showing they were winning business
- Organised further sessions to build momentum for all salespeople
- Rescheduled and facilitated, via MS Teams, the postponed pilots
- On 11th May, within eight weeks of lockdown, the first virtual session of the completely redesigned GfK Sales DNA programme was facilitated by TPI





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## Designing an effective digital learning transformation programme

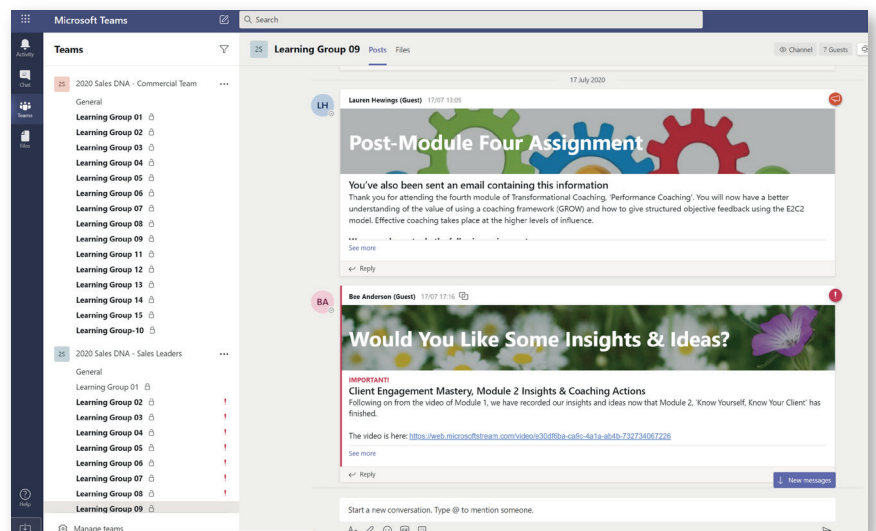
The objectives and success criteria of the programme remained in place, despite the lockdown. The anticipated and required impact of the programme remained unaltered, whether a face-to-face, or virtual experience. In short, the delivery mechanism became a secondary consideration because we kept sight of the learning outcomes and maintained relentless focus on the learner experience. With people working from home and potentially isolated in a way no one had experienced, we had to create learning communities and ensure individuals had the opportunity to learn, reflect and receive feedback on their personal learning. The need was immediate and very real. There was no time for 'modelling best practice'. In this unknown situation we focused on 'emergent practice', adopting a rapid design, deploy and improve approach. The essential element was rapid feedback to enable instant redesign. We had total confidence in the content of the programme. What mattered now was the way in which it was experienced. The design included 'feedback loops' - opportunities for us to gather insight, make changes and deliver impact. Examples are:

1. Using Teams to deliver 'living invitations to a learning journey' - normally, people receive joining instructions and invitations and are expected to understand them. Instead we used Teams to broadcast videos explaining the upcoming sessions and what to expect
2. Open House Sessions – designed to allow participants to give feedback and ask questions of the learning team. The nature of the sessions is that the team were able to take on all comments and feedback in an open way
3. GfK was developing over 130 people as sales coaches. A culture of continuous learning, a key corporate objective,

had to be created. We have provided coaches with feedback from the salespeople's sessions via video and Teams which they are incorporating into their coaching practice

## Making appropriate use of available tools and technologies

We have known for years that everyone has their own learning and communication style. There was a plethora of tools and technologies available to GfK. The issue to address was how to deploy our joint resources to deliver maximum learner experience. For this project we used tools and technologies in the following ways:



### 1. MS Teams

- GfK was in the process of migrating to Teams. The imperative to move to a completely online programme could not have come at a more challenging moment in this respect. It appeared on laptops one day and was being experienced the next. We made Teams central to our online delivery. The participants were divided into learning cohorts, each with its own space in Teams. Here, they could view the learning journey, see announcements made by the joint GfK/TPI team, and post questions and share experiences
- Even before we launched, we used Teams as the collaboration tool to co-design the programme. We found that use of whiteboards formed great collaboration spaces; and the joint development area linked to SharePoint meant that we could develop content rapidly
- Whilst every live session had a pathway to ensure

“The training material is inspiring and good”

*Regional President*



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consistent delivery and learner experience, it is the fact that every cohort will be different. We used Teams to great effect because when conversations went in a certain direction the facilitators were able to share new insights rapidly – links to useful resources via the chat, announcements to the cohort in the team spaces etc. Each team felt that this was their journey, yet we also shared insight across all learning cohorts by simply sending an announcement to all learning cohorts. Teams has proven extremely flexible in the way we have communicated with all learners. TPI facilitators were also able to share links to materials in their own resource library to make the learning experience a richer one. The chat function enabled all participants to help build a resources library relevant to all

- Teams was the central repository which meant that we could quickly access material and repurpose it to create bite-sized content whilst linking content from the GfK learning management system to make content easily accessible and relevant
- Teams provided the perfect forum for creating live feedback loops with every participant and cohort

## 2. Articulate Rise

- We jointly created over 20 short courses, using a large amount of content and expertise provided by TPI and using GfK's own in-house course designers. The collaborative nature of Articulate enabled online iteration in real time and the result is a suite of modules delivered globally which has significantly enhanced the learner experience both pre- and post-online session delivery

## 3. Video creation

- We created supporting videos - rapidly – using the Adobe suite and Camtasia

## 4. Learning@GfK

- We used this learning management system (LMS) in two ways:
  - o Roll-out of the overall programme
  - o Supporting individuals with specific learning needs

## 5. TPI Portal

- Each module of the two programmes we delivered was supported by an additional TPI portal, thereby encouraging participants to access content through a variety of sources

## 6. Apps

- TPI provided a 'Connections Tool' app which supported the application of a large part of the learning for both leaders and salespeople and aids the improved connection with GfK clients – central to our strategic goals
- Occasional other apps were made available as learners required, including Perceptual Preferences and Salesperson's Secret Code

## Executing an implementation strategy, aligning with organisational goals, and engaging with key stakeholders

The programme was **co-created with the business**. We assessed each job role involved in the programme by conducting a 180-degree competency survey using TPI's Development Prioritiser tool. We also invited participants to complete the TPI Salesperson's Secret Code survey, which is a global benchmark for understanding how the beliefs of salespeople are affecting their potential on-job behaviours. Based on the outcomes we created focus areas for the programme. However, we also respected that all learners may also have development areas outside the focus of the programme, so created an online learning resource, matching learning resources (e-learning) to each competency.

We **collaborated closely with Sales Operations** management, with weekly updates and moment-by-moment collaboration via Teams chats. We provide articles and stories for their internal communications channels, helping to develop the 'commercial culture' of the organisation. GfK is now using this information to inform the commercial onboarding process, which will bring significant commercial benefits as we bring new hires up to capacity much faster.

“Understand clearly the message and direction we are heading to”

*Sales DNA Participant*



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## Every step of the programme was evaluated immediately.

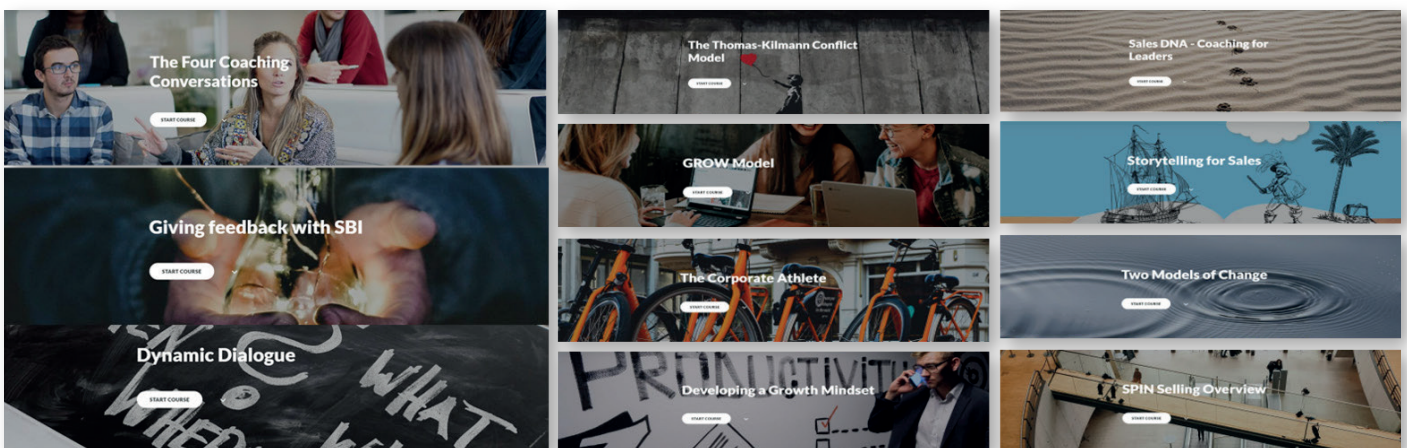
Clearly, we wanted to ensure we were meeting learners' needs and expectations. The new method of delivery lent itself to constant evaluation and enabled us to remodel or add new content. We gathered feedback after each session and shared with all relevant parties – this might mean just the group, or all cohorts. The feedback was used, weekly, to keep the Executive Leadership fully informed, with a formal quarterly update. We included key internal stakeholders in the programme - Regional Presidents and Strategic Account Managers were also participants on the programme. Workers Councils and HR colleagues were included in all key planning stages. This closeness enabled senior leaders and ELT to engage with participants and reinforce the learning from the programme.

**GfK kept TPI extremely close** to the implementation strategy because of the way we were required to implement technology to support the learners' journey and utilise proprietary material in the creation of content. The TPI team acted as a GfK internal team, with weekly updates and constant contact via Teams chat. The TPI Delivery Director, Mark Ridley, said, "Being included at every step in the learning journey by GfK has delivered a much richer experience for all parties, but especially the learners. We have been able to respond immediately and add content rapidly. We have become far more integral to the development of individual learners than might normally be the case in programmes like this. This programme is the new benchmark in our view."

## Supporting learners throughout the journey

We ensured that learners' needs were at the centre of the programme.

1. Learners need to focus on learning without worrying about their timetable or what they need to be doing. We designed a frictionless process. We created:
  - a. MS Teams spaces for both the overall teams and the individual learning cohorts
  - b. A clear timetable, setting expectations at the start of the program with emails from senior stakeholders
  - c. An introductory video for the programme and then added an additional video to guide people through the first task
  - d. Individual learning plans for all participants, so they could see each stage of the programme. These are updated weekly and there is a monthly check-in to provide an overview of the progression of the programme
2. We flexed the programme to the individual learner's needs. We saw, regularly, leaders engaging the facilitators to understand the progress of their teams and where there were opportunities to support them further



3. Adapting the programme from the face-to-face to virtual meant that the learners needed smaller chunks of learning. That gave us the opportunity to space the learning to enable application in the field, get/give feedback and fit it into their daily routines
4. The commencement of virtual sessions included a period where experience of applying new learning from the previous



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session were shared and where facilitators could reinforce key content

- 5. More than 20 short 'momentum builders' were created to check understanding of content covered and to reinforce key messages. This also highlighted any gaps in understanding from the virtual sessions
- 6. We set 'Quest Challenges', business-focussed, practical challenges requiring demonstrable learning application. Although at time of writing we have not held the final success review sessions, the first success review resulted in over 90 success stories, allowing learners to demonstrate their learning and success through such a turbulent time. This inspired others through the global lockdown period. We will be building on this success review format so that the expectation of everybody is that there is evidence of application and impact
- 7. We held open-house sessions allowing learners to drop in to have general discussions. The questions raised have gone into...
- 8. An FAQ area, updated regularly on MS Teams

## Positive impact in terms of business continuity and both individual and organisational performance

As a result of the programme redesign there was no delay in delivering GfK Sales DNA to its global commercial teams as they rise to the challenge of a changing marketplace. As things turned out, the programme has been a vehicle for bringing people together in ways which we could never have imagined prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The learning journey has assumed a personal as well as professional importance to many of GfK's people. The nature of conversations has changed; and the programme has helped people deal with uncertainty. GfK was in the process of rolling out MS Teams as the pandemic hit. What better opportunity could we have had to demonstrate its value to its people and to immerse them in its usage? To have delayed and waited to deliver our original programme would have been the wrong move, both from a commercial and human perspective. TPI has made a major contribution to the de-risking of the GfK business in this changed world. TPI has accelerated GfK's success.

