More Agility, Flexibility, People Development and Training

Following the acquisition of MLS Advantage Member ML Solutions Ltd by Riliance Software Ltd the company has now been rebranded as Riliance Training Ltd.
http://riliancetraining.com

Bill Jones is the new CEO and the company is in the process of significantly developing its training services.

In addition to the Money Laundering products there will be Cyber training, Bribery and Corruption and more and upon a significantly enhanced platform.

We frequently hear about the benefits of mobility and agility (hosted IT and Comms, video conferencing, outsourced transcription, hot-desking and the like)provided by other MLS Advantage members. The new e-learning revolution will add to all of that as well as the learning benefits

- 24 hour access to training content from any PC, tablet or mobile phone
- Instant access to a comprehensive suite of relevant training courses and other training material.
- On going refresher training using inter active animated content.
- Functionality to provide bespoke reporting on training results.
- Embracing mobile learning as part of an integrated training solution.
- The ability to easily manage content delivery, sequencing and versioning.
- Advanced content distribution, management and tracking capabilities.

Bill Jones comments *"The link up between Riliance and ML Solutions has created a fantastic opportunity to develop a unique training service that will cater for the needs of all businesses in this modern and ever changing world"*

Bill and I both believe that we are about to enter a new era of e-learning and that businesses will demand firstly training that they can control and supervise and secondly training that meets their required outcomes. bill.jones@riliancetraining.com or suzanne.allwright@riliance.co.uk

Slightly Stunned by this………That "selling" word

Despite starting my career as an accountant(not a lawyer)- I spent an early days with a career with Rank Xerox - probably the best sales business at the time.

We all had to undergo sales training and the company spawned two leading sales courses PSS and SPIN and I don't think it did me any harm. Some of us were lucky enough to

participate in a Senior Management Education Programme something which I am working on for the legal sector – more on that in the next few months.
I spend a great deal of times with law firms on their strategies and business development plans which require a process and cultural change for all lawyers to enable capitalisation on client retention, client development and new business acquisition. How to communicate the proposition - to whom - and when - and how to ask for the order.

It seems, as though suddenly, after regarding the word with distaste, lawyers are talking about "selling". Magic circle firms, global firms, full service regional firms, specialist practitioners and local family firms are experiencing competition and fee pressure.

In short, we are beginning to understand that business won't just come walking in and we have to do something to get it. Unfortunately often the people who are closest to the clients (lawyers themselves) are generally very poor at the behavioural skills they need to persuade clients to choose them above other apparently similar options.

If we can't establish differentiation in the sales process, the only other determinants of winning new business are price and luck. Some firms have specialist BD managers, but these people rarely get anywhere near the client conversations at the critical points, and don't have consultative selling skills either. So it's a challenge we are beginning to recognise.

Imagine my surprise when 30+ years on I came across this from Huthwaite International http://www.huthwaite.co.uk/market-sectors/legal/spin-selling-for-lawyers/ yes SPIN selling for lawyers. The whole programme specifically adapted.

Huthwaite International, has adapted its behavioural skills training especially for lawyers and their firms. Lawyers can now benefit from the research base into what successful people do in sales conversations, and experience a highly immersive training programme with extensive role-play and feedback, a range of digital pre- and post-course preparation and reinforcement, and participation in a worldwide sales excellence community. The programmes are offered to firms in-house, or for individuals at a public course. All you need is an open mind, with a readiness to change behaviour and change results.

The main message to me is that lawyers are obviously recognising the benefits that this sort of personal development can bring.

New Year Resolutions

No apologies for a reminder. As managing partner;

- I will ensure that the 3 year business strategy is in place and up to date

- I will sit down individually with the other partners in the firm and have an honest discussion about their likes and dislikes particularly with regards management and business development and potential retirement of career changes so that we can make sure we have the right people managing and doing business development and if necessary have a succession plan in place

- I will make sure that there is enhanced communication within the practice so that everyone understands the strategy, the business plan and their role in it and will make sure perhaps with internal newsletters and departmental feedback how it is all going

- I will ensure that my legal department heads have clear **delegated accountability** for

    - Billing
    - Gross Profit
    - Working Capital
    - Compliance
    - Business Development

- I will ensure that this **accountability is delegated** to individual fee earners by the department heads and that their responsibility for billing, time targets and cash collection are quite clear – measured and with Key Performance Indicators in place to drive behaviour

- I will look at some meritocracy reward as some of the team contribute so much more than others in management and business development.

- I will make sure there are training and coaching programmes in place for people development and above all meeting the objectives of the business not just ticking the box for CPD points.

- I will ensure that the department head has a clear approach to bring shortcomings back to budget or has in place a means to capitalise on opportunities providing regular forecasts

- I will ensure that I have checked personally the business continuity and disaster recovery plans for my IT function as we cannot afford for the system not to perform or be unrecoverable for a week

- I will make sure that my Microsoft licenses are still supported and that controls are in place to make sure my IT and telephony are safe from cyber attack

- I will ensure that there a teams within every department, with people of all levels and disciplines are looking at our business processes to improve effectiveness and efficiency – cutting costs and enhancing client experience

- I will start a new regime where I and department heads take much more interest in the capability of our Practice and Case Management systems and by engagement with the vendors see if the products with their latest releases can assist in our business priorities and if not make it clear to the vendors what is wanted including where necessary integration with third party products

- I will ensure that there is a prioritisation and plan around essential IT development to assist in the achievement of objectives across all departments – not who shouts the loudest

- I will make sure that my IT is used to the full to ease the compliance process

- I will ensure that there is a clear authority matrix is in place to ensure that discretionary spend and recruitment is controlled

- I will ensure that the firm has clear processes and mind set and culture to ensure that in bound business enquiries are handled pleasantly and effectively. I will challenge department heads to up their conversion rates of inbound enquiries with a say 60% target for starters.

- I will make sure that n% client satisfaction rating is my Number 1 non-financial KPI. I will measure it and take action in areas where we fall short

- I will always remember that my greatest source on future business is from my existing clients and I will make sure they know about all of our services, repeats (like Wills) and new market trends (like LPA)

- I will make sure that I monitor marketing initiatives for new business and ensure that success is measured, go for low hanging fruit and not carry on a programme with poor results

Bill Kirby is a director of Professional Choice Consultancy offering advice to firms on business issues from strategy, planning, business development, the effective use of IT applications and IT hosting for compliance, business continuity and DR. He can be contacted at billkirby@professionalchoiceconsultancy.com