



Preparing Millennials for Success in Sales... and Life

An out-of-the-box approach to sales training focuses on mindset and behaviors first, process second

The room is buzzing with excitement as a group of 20 bright recent college graduates looking to launch their Major League Soccer careers are meeting each other for the first time. They will spend three months together learning how to break through to busy people on the phone, build instant rapport and become ticket sales rockstars.

“Our program is highly selective and very intense. We’ve developed over 250 hours of unique ticket sales training curriculum over the years - the best in the world,” says Jeff Berryhill, Director of Major League Soccer’s National Sales Center, the innovative sales training program which will transform these young people from sales rookies to confident and improvisational sales professionals.

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The National Sales Center (NSC) was originally born out of the challenge of high turnover and lag time in recruiting and hiring new sales people at the **Major League Soccer** clubs. “The idea was to create a program, which recruits and trains sales talent for the teams, so that when a vacancy occurs, they could fill it immediately and not lose revenue or have to invest additional resources,” shares Berryhill. “Our innovative approach to designing and executing the program has helped us not only accomplish the initial goal, but create additional benefits, such as high sales performance and retention. The graduates of our program stay 37% longer than sales people recruited by the clubs directly and bring 43% more revenue.”

What’s the secret?

NSC trainees receive intense classroom training on all things sales, followed by real-world practice of selling on the phone for various clubs paired with professional coaching by industry leaders. All that rests on the foundation of a mindset and a set of behaviors that build the trainees’ confidence, resilience and agility. The mindset and behavior training is the bread and butter of the Brave New Workshop (BNW), a 60 year old satirical and improvisational comedy theater, which over the past 20 years has created a methodology for experiential learning that has wowed Fortune 500 clients and impacted the lives of thousands of professionals.

“We invested in our partnership with the Brave New Workshop, because we see how important it is to prepare our trainees to be comfortable being uncomfortable,” says Berryhill. “The Brave New Workshop improvisational practice helps them learn specific techniques they use on the phone with customers as well as handle the emotional roller coaster of sales...and of life!”

The Brave New Workshop’s curriculum is fully embedded in the NSC’s program. Trainees attend a high energy kick off delivered by BNW owner, author and sought-after keynote speaker John Sweeney who shares with them stories and inspiration from 20 years of entrepreneurial success. The most important idea John instills in them is that an attitude of service and gratitude can work magic in the field of sales. “We have been able to grow our business and increase revenue 14 times by focusing intensely on building real, meaningful relationships with our customers. ”

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The cohort experiences two more behaviors and mindset deep-dive sessions when BNW master facilitators Margi Simmons and Bobby Gardner customize the practice to what the trainees need. Emotional intelligence, powerful every-day practices to manage one's energy levels, and ways to reframe any circumstance or objection are top of the list.

Brave New Workshop's sales activation approach teaches:

- 1. Ways to increase Emotional Intelligence.**
- 2. Practical exercises to boost energy and motivation.**
- 3. Reframing objections into opportunities to connect.**
- 4. Persistence and 'yes, and' attitude.**
- 5. Confidence to ask for the sale.**

In the meantime, NSC staff members who have been certified by the BNW, as well as trainees themselves continue to lead improv activities from the BNW playbook each week. That paired with energizing morning video starters by Sweeney keep the focus on mindset and behavior and help trainees navigate their phone customer interactions with positive energy, quick reaction and authentic engagement.

"At the Rapids, we utilize the improv-based approach many of our managers and sales staff were first exposed to by the Brave New Workshop while at Major League Soccer's National Sales Center" says Jacob Hanselman, Director of Sales for the Colorado Rapids and NSC alum. "In particular, we've found immense value in building improv into our Sales Orientation and Sales Combines that we use to on-board or to evaluate the potential hiring of new sales staff looking to break into the ticket sales industry. In each of these instances, we use an improv activity and tie it to a particular step in the 6 Steps Sales Process such as utilizing the "What's in the Box" improv breakout as a fun way to relate to overcoming sales objections. By using improv in addition to scripting and role plays we add a fun and entertaining component to sales training. Building off of foundational principles such as "Being Comfortable Being Uncomfortable" and "Yes, And" lets us accept new ideas throughout our entire sales training and on-boarding process."

Making a difference

The NSC is helping change the face of MLS sales. As of April of 2018, 50 NSC alumni have been promoted to key leadership positions, some have far outpaced the typical speed of promotion. NSC alumni are regularly recognized for the annual sales awards and continue to promote the lessons they have learned from Brave New Workshop while at the NSC.

"We really started using improv at D.C. United after a wave of new hires received hands-on training from the Brave New Workshop during our time at the NSC," says James Clark, Manager, Season and Premium Sales of DC United. "Over the last five-plus years we have used basic improv games to develop key sales skills, spice up weekly meetings and even to help identify quality candidates."

Soccer is growing in North America, and with it, a new generation of savvy sales professionals and leaders are flourishing and creating values for the league and their communities.



About the BNW

Brave New Workshop (BNW) is a boutique training company that transforms people's thinking and behavior through the use of experiential learning rooted in the art-form of improvisation and bolstered by 20+ years of working with Fortune 500 companies. It's impossible to create meaningful mind-shifts and behavioral change without a visceral experience that includes mind, body and emotion. Typically such experiences are costly and logistically taxing but the BNW has created a methodology to trigger transformation within the confines of any meeting space. BNW's experiences are full of laughter, levity, and always highly customized to the needs and objectives of the specific audience. Depending on the needs BNW can create solutions for executives, leaders, managers, individual contributors or all of the above. Programs can be live, virtual or blended and feature best practices in learner experience and instructional design. Whether it's an inspirational keynote, training sessions, behavioral mobile practice platform or all of the above, the BNW is excited to help you move the needle for your teams and help them thrive in an environment of constant change. www.bravenewworkshop.com/creativeoutreach

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About the NSC

The National Sales Center (NSC) is a highly selective sales training program. It provides a one-of-kind learning environment and exposure to the fundamentals of Major League Soccer ticket sales. Trainees have the opportunity to apply what they are learning to the sales of season, group and mini plan ticket inventory for different Major League Soccer clubs during the program. In addition to the real-life sales experience selling for Major League Soccer clubs, trainees benefit from instructional feedback from audio and video analysis as well as innovative coaching from local improvisational theatre instructors. <https://www.mlssoccer.com/nationalsalescenter/about>