



SALES + MARKETING



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CASE STUDY: Commercial Effectiveness + Sales

Sales and Marketing Under a Microscope

FLINN SCIENTIFIC | EDUCATION PRODUCTS AND CURRICULA | U.S.

The scientific method starts with asking questions and doing research—and so does commercial transformation.

Flinn Scientific, a leading scientific equipment supplier in the educational market, partnered with ZS to closely examine its commercial model using ZS's Commercial Effectiveness Navigator. From there, the company learned what it needed to change and then executed a dramatic transformation, saving money, increasing revenue and creating a new foundation for commercial growth.

The Problem

Flinn Scientific was struggling with the very definition of a good problem to have. Business mostly came straight to the company with little need to market or provide outbound sales, and their clients were deeply loyal. "We often call our customers the Flinn Fanatics," says CEO Mike Lavelle. "If you look at Net Promoter Scores, ours are in the high 60s. We have customer surveys that always come back in the high 90% range in terms of customer satisfaction."

So what was the problem? A combination of missed opportunity and an increasingly competitive landscape. Lavelle knew that if the company made no change to its commercial model, Flinn Scientific wouldn't just miss extra revenue. At some point, it would also lose market share to a more assertive competitor.

The Solution

Together, Lavelle's team and ZS worked to identify Flinn Scientific's main growth opportunities, key pain points and costly competitive disadvantages. To do this, they used ZS's Commercial Effectiveness Navigator (CEN), a comprehensive framework of best practice statements covering sales, marketing, operations and other key business drivers. CEN empowers problem solving and drives commercial excellence by helping clients diagnose commercial challenges, prioritize improvement opportunities and build transformational road maps.

"This was a different playbook than what the company was used to over the past 40 years," Lavelle says. "We had some internal expertise to do this but it was limited, so we knew we needed to bring in help in a way that's practical, in a way that's scalable, in a way that actually sticks and creates results."

Flinn Scientific embarked on a series of brainstorming sessions and workshops, using the CEN framework to keep them focused and returning to fundamental questions about what's best for their customers. Lavelle also engaged ZS to coach team members in new, proactive sales positions to help ensure new behaviors and success during the adoption of a customer engagement playbook.

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Lavelle found CEN to be critical in keeping his team on task and focused. “But more important, it was invaluable in reminding us: ‘What’s the bigger purpose in what we’re trying to accomplish? Does it support that end business objective?’ It was very good for us as a company because we tend to be very process-oriented, but we’re charting a path that’s very new to some folks, and it was a great part of the journey for us.”

Flinn Scientific was able to uncover a wealth of opportunities by using the CEN framework, evolving its business to accommodate a transformational commercial model for the next generation of growth. The company was able to identify multiple new roles that needed to be filled, as well as roles that needed to change or move to new departments.

“We learned some tough things about our company,” Lavelle says. “But I’m so glad we learned them because now we’re in the process of rebuilding them, growing them and fixing them, and we’re seeing unbelievably strong results from a commercial standpoint because of it.”

The Impact

Early indications suggest that this new commercial model is working.

The sales personnel that ZS coached using new methods demonstrated a 10% increase in revenue generation in just six weeks. Flinn Scientific was able to reduce unnecessary

and duplicative work that has saved significant time and costs, and then use those cost savings to hire additional salespeople.

“I would say in our early indications today, only six weeks [after launching our new model], we feel very comfortable that this project is paying for itself, and you could even argue that maybe it has already paid for itself,” Lavelle says.

When asked to reflect on his work with ZS, Lavelle was clear on his perspective, emphasizing how the process helped create a better outcome. “Effectiveness improved, our connection rates improved, our close rates improved. And it all came out of a five- or six-week process with the individuals who went through the journey coming out the other end being motivated, excited and energized about the future and their ability to sell more.”

This remarkable transformation is just an important first step for Lavelle and Flinn Scientific in a longer journey with much promise. As Flinn Scientific continues to grow its business, its commercial operations will continue to evolve from this new growth-oriented foundation.

ZS is the world’s largest firm focused exclusively on helping companies improve overall performance and grow revenue and market share, through end-to-end sales and marketing solutions—from customer insights and strategy to analytics, operations and technology. More than 5,000 ZS professionals in 22 offices worldwide draw on deep industry and domain expertise to deliver impact for clients across multiple industries. To learn more, visit www.zs.com or follow us on Twitter and LinkedIn.