



Objective Assessment – Laminex Group Case Study 3rd July 2007

The Laminex Group provides premium decorative surfaces

The Laminex Group is Australia's leading marketer, distributor and manufacturer of premium decorative work surfaces and bench tops.

The company was investing heavily in training and developing its 150+ national sales team in five States, when it sought Objective Assessment's expertise to improve its return on investment. As a result, The Laminex Group now has a better understanding of its people, improved ROI for its training budget, and is creating the change required to realise the company's commercial potential.

Laminex looks for return on training investment

Barry Smith, Group Sales and Distribution Manager, comments, "We were spending significant amounts on learning and development for the sales and distribution teams so needed to know how these programs were improving our interaction with customers."

"Before continuing our intensive training schedule, I felt it crucial to stop and look at our people's ability to develop and apply training in their day to day worlds."

"I asked our five State sales managers, 'Are we effective?', 'Do we have the right mindset to create a major step change?' and 'How can we create a competitive advantage?' They agreed there was room for substantial improvement in our existing teams."

Darryl Ball, State Sales Manager for The Laminex Group in Victoria and Tasmania, elaborates, "Our sales force effectiveness program focused on tools for our sales people to identify gaps in their business, but there was one fundamental flaw in our program - we knew the strengths of our sales teams and sales managers but did not know where there areas for development lay."

The goal: develop Laminex's existing team

Barry sought an external supplier to evaluate, train and mentor his national sales force.

"We reviewed six providers including many traditional training suppliers. Objective Assessment focused on individuals' capacity to grow based on their competencies, which was important because we wanted to develop our existing team."

"They took a holistic view, offering tools on an individual and collective basis to assess our teams against known international benchmarks. This approach, I believed, would foster a 'sales profession' within our company."

"My vision is that The Laminex Group gains the reputation of an employer of choice for professional sales people – that getting a sales role here is difficult because our recruitment process is rigorous and our standards are high, without apology."

- Barry Smith, Group Sales and Distribution Manager, The Laminex Group

Online evaluation reveals the sales team's capability and potential

The first step was assessing The Laminex Group's team of 150+ field sales people using Objective Assessment's Sales Force Profile evaluation tool.



“The online program evaluates each team member, but most importantly, builds up a collective view of our entire sales organisation. Through it we benchmark individuals internally as well as compare State operations, to provide consistency of output across the company,” explains Barry.

Objective Assessment makes the results meaningful and actionable

Communicating the report findings to sales managers and salespeople in a non-threatening way was paramount, Barry explains. “Objective Assessment used a combination of coaching and mentoring to ensure my managers were comfortable with the assessments.”

“Understanding how to make meaning of the data was important because the sales managers had to review their team's effectiveness. Objective Assessment helped the managers understand first – then teach second,” Barry finishes.

Darryl explains, “We found the insight and results unexpected. I didn't expect to learn some of the things that Objective Assessment revealed. It helped me personally identify areas for my own development. It's a confronting and honest process.”

“The process unearthed a significant upside in our sales management team, giving them the opportunity to fully appreciate their roles as managers, team leaders, coaches and mentors.”

- **Barry Smith, Group Sales and Distribution Manager, The Laminex Group**

Identifying growth potential within the sales teams is a major step forward

The Objective Assessment evaluation pinpointed the potential achievable by each individual.

Barry continues, “Based on these assessments we now connect individual growth potential to State performance. By overlaying actual financial results with possible improvements, we forecast the commercial impact to the business of optimising their performance individually and as a group.”

“The question then becomes ‘how do we tap into that to make sure the individual, and our support for that individual, enables us to realise the upside?’”

“It is our responsibility, hand in hand with Objective Assessment, to make sure we tap into the ‘upside’ of our sales team and realise it.”

- **Barry Smith, Group Sales and Distribution Manager, The Laminex Group**

Focusing professional development to achieve the team's potential

Barry explains how The Laminex Group is creating positive organisational change by altering its approach to training and focusing its development budget,

“We are carefully targeting development by territory and individual. We are building a program around individuals and can see how our in-house learning departments and sales managers can best influence positive behavioural changes.”

“We are applying individual and collective learning tools to actually translate professional development into tangible financial and commercial gains.”

- **Barry Smith, Group Sales and Distribution Manager, The Laminex Group**

Express Screen pre-hire tool sets hiring standard

The Laminex Group also uses Objective Assessment's Express Screen pre-hire tool to profile candidates as part of its formal recruitment process.



“The pre-hire tool is not the ultimate decider, but it helps set a standard and gives us another piece of intelligence on candidates. The Express Screen evaluation allows us to recruit at a particular benchmark nationally, without diluting our standards,” Barry finishes.

The outcome: a mentor and partner in Objective Assessment

“We wanted someone to become part of our process – Objective Assessment has certainly done that. The company’s MD, Beverly Jones, has freely given her time and expertise, from one on one meetings to group sessions tailored to the needs of our sales managers.”

“My objective was to get return on investment by improving the effectiveness of the application of training funds. We’ve achieved that,” says Barry.

Darryl adds, “We are seeing real results. I’m a big advocate of Objective Assessment.”

“Objective Assessment’s willingness to get involved at the coalface and their ability to actually understand the culture of what we are trying to achieve, is first class.”

- **Barry Smith, Group Sales and Distribution Manager, The Laminex Group**