

WHITE PAPER

DON'T RUN ANOTHER PRESALES SKILLS WORKSHOP UNTIL YOU'VE DONE THESE THREE THINGS!

I have a Paragliding pilot license. For those of you who've met me, I'll pre-empt the weight jokes; my weight + kit + wing + harness is under the maximum weight of a typical XL wing... but only just.

The real problem is I qualified 15 years ago and I've never flown since. I can remember some of the theory; lines, risers, leading edges but I'm pretty sure if I climbed into a harness and launched myself from a hill now I'd probably either...

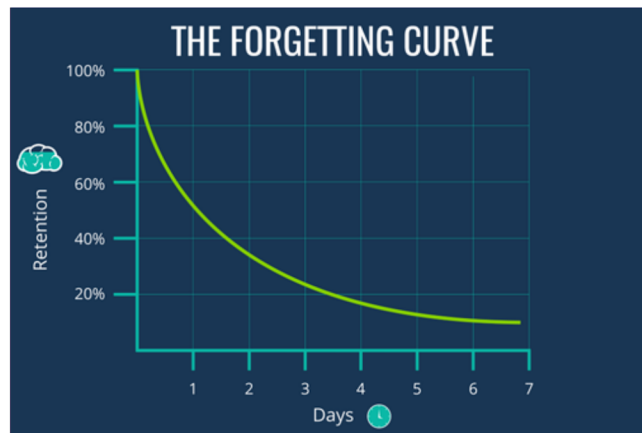
1. Kill myself (obviously hasn't already happened unless I'm ghost-writing this)
2. Land on a cow (seen it, neither pilot nor cow hurt, but both embarrassed) or
3. Land astride a fence (done it, very painful) or perhaps break a limb.

The point here is that you can attend a course, gain some new skills, but unless you constantly practice, reinforce and have your skills checked (or re-certified) they will rapidly become rusty and you become a danger to yourself and those around you (including cows).

The Ebbinghaus 'Forgetting Curve'

There is some science behind this; it's called the **Ebbinghaus 'Forgetting Curve'** (graphic).

Essentially, if you learn something and don't regularly reinforce it, you'll forget the skills and learning at an alarmingly exponential rate. You'll forget 80% of what you've learned within a few days and 90% within the first month.



Think about how much budget and investment you were planning to invest in your next PreSales skills workshop and then write off 90% of it; maybe put it on a horse race.

In our world of PreSales, perhaps you're about to run a demonstration or presentation skills, discovery, objection handling, value and insight or negotiation techniques workshop. Just running a workshop is not enough, in fact, it's a waste of enablement budget unless you find a way to sustain the value and reinforce the learning.

The Critical Three Things

So what are the three things you need to have in place before you run your next PreSales skills workshop:

1. Organise a coaching or reinforcement program to sustain the **right behaviours**
2. Constantly 'Inspect what you expect'
3. Measure the impact against the **desired results** / KPIs

The Kirkpatrick Model

Let's next dig into what's meant by the right behaviours and the desired results by looking at **The Kirkpatrick model** (graphic).



When I first met the Kirkpatrick model, it was a revelation. Its four levels of training evaluation instantly clarified something I was finding difficult to explain:

Level 1: Reaction: How engaging and relevant was the learning (Did you enjoy the workshop?)

Level 2: Learning: The skills and knowledge acquired (Did you learn anything?)

Level 3: Behaviour: The changes in behaviour applying what's been learned (Did you change how you work based on what you learned from the workshop?)

Level 4: Results: The results and outcomes that prove the ROI of the training investment (Did the change in how you work impact the KPIs that justified the workshop investment?)

For me, Levels 3 and 4 are critical. There is no point in investing in any training unless you have a plan to constantly check and reinforce the behavioural change. If you're about to invest in demonstration skills, for instance, how will you ensure that the team are constantly utilising and building on the new skills and behaviours? Highly developed demonstration skills on their own don't win deals but poor demonstration skills very definitely can lose you deals. Think about the cost of sales and opportunity cost of coming second (losing) in a large enterprise 'must win' deal.

You did link the planned training investment to business results, didn't you? In fact, the way to establish training needs and investment is to start at **Level: 4 Results**, what outcomes do you want, perhaps:

- an increase in the effectiveness of your client interactions (maybe reduce the number of demos needed to win; increase close rates and deal size using PreSales influence)
- an increase in efficiency; handle more deals/revenue without increasing headcount

Once you know the Results you're aiming for that will tell you **Level 3: Behaviour**, what behaviours are needed to produce those results? Then you'll know **Level 2: Learning**, what skills, techniques, enablement tools, reinforcement, coaching and learning are needed to produce the desired behaviours and then you can ensure there'll be a positive **Level 1: Reaction** to the workshop itself.

So back to the 'three things'; as a manager, you need to revisit the skills learned in a workshop, promote best practices and early successes using the skills, set expectation levels, attend dry-runs, 'inspect what you expect' and focus on the business results.

Oh, and maybe make sure your team don't land on any cows!