



Commercial Readiness Review. Are you entrepreneurial? Are you READY?

Current Situation

Post Richards, as the further education and skills sector moves toward a culture of autonomy and commercial independence, FE providers need to generate sufficient interest in their services to attract the right number of students, employers and related funding, or they will fail. Two disciplines are required – which have not necessarily been areas of core competence in the past.

1. Marketing the college

The role of marketing in FE is changing – fast. The wide adoption of social media via the Internet has dramatically reduced the impact of traditional marketing, and the changes in the student funding model require that FE organisations must sell themselves more than ever before. Consumers no longer look for information in the same way, becoming increasingly reliant on referrals and recommendations to make decisions. Traditional marketing is no longer the central medium to convey important messages.



“Using old marketing methods simply won’t get to students. They get their news from their phones and the internet. That’s where we need to be.” Governor, Top10 college.

2. Sales to employers

Engaging with employers with Apprenticeships and full cost services demands a Business to Business (B2B) relationship between FE providers and employers, based on a professional sales & marketing approach. However, the recent Richards’ Report concluded that FE providers had failed to demonstrate sufficient ‘tangible value’ to employers, and that significant opportunities were being missed. A consultative approach to sales is now needed to approach employers, identify opportunities and present provider services in the best possible way. To engage more often and more effectively with potential buyers, the business development team needs to understand where the most likely customers are, what their pressures and needs might be, and develop a professional approach that will build the organisation’s image and develop positive relationships – good business!



3 Strands; the effectiveness report:

1. Marketing strategy elements

- A review of the current marketing strategy & activity
- A digital marketing benchmarking report
- A recommended set of marketing skills and competencies
- An assessment of where the current team is against those
- Recommendations on actions to increase marketing effectiveness

2. Sales strategy elements

- A review of the sales strategy and process to assess clarity and consistency
- A review of the sales pipeline and forecasting system
- A recommended set of sales skills and competencies
- An assessment of where the current team is against those
- Recommendations on actions to increase sales effectiveness

3. Combined elements

- Review the alignment of sales and marketing planning and activity
- Identify opportunities to improve ROI on all commercial activity
- Drive an integrated strategic plan to deliver a 'joined up' approach between marketing and sales for a clear programme of activities and relevant sales collateral (web, brochures, social media etc)
- A review of the current marketing strategy, activity and elements
- A digital marketing benchmarking report
- Recommendations on actions to increase sales and marketing effectiveness
- Identify opportunities to improve ROI on all commercial activity
- A strategic review of current software, and recommendations for improvement (CRM and marketing automation, plus links to legacy, college and enrollment systems)

The overall aim of the Commercial Readiness Review is to enable the provider to achieve sales and marketing excellence, measured by achieving commercial targets. To enable this we assess current activities, processes and competencies and identify changes that will generate a more effective and aligned commercial strategy. This in turn will deliver a higher number and percentage enrollment of students, and the ability to engage with employers by developing and delivering apprenticeship programmes aligned to employer needs. The assessment delivers a commercial effectiveness report with 3 strands.

The FE division of XEER focuses on improving profitability and cutting costs in Further Education providers. Key areas we focus on are digital marketing review and training, consultative sales training, coaching and strategic planning.

XEER is led by Paul Calkin. Paul formerly worked with the FE sector through LSIS, where he delivered over 60 improvement plans to the sector with an ROI averaging 11.3 to 1.

He is also responsible for the development and implementation of digital marketing programmes and consultative sales programmes across the sector, with over 1000 delegates now having been trained.

The consultative sales programme is the only one endorsed by the [National Apprenticeship Service](#) and [LSIS](#).

Paul has delivered modern marketing and sales training across 39 countries for the Unisys organisation. paul@xeer.co.uk

Activities and Results for Business impact

- Better engagement with target communities & key influencers
- More leads, opportunities and contracts
- Increased income levels in targeted areas
- More efficient and integrated working practices.
- Better ROI on sales and marketing investments
- Improved culture within the sales and marketing teams
- Structured development programmes

Assessment activities

The following is a list of the typical activities that will take place. They comprise a mix of desk research, face to face meetings and telephone interviews. We will access external data in addition to the information you provide.

- Data collection (research, website review & competitors)
- 1:1 interviews with sales and marketing staff
- Discussions with selected senior managers
- Assessment and evaluation of data
- Collation & preparation of results
- Presentation of the results and recommendations to the SMT