

CASE STUDY



TN Media: Leading by Example

Management team learns, leads, and gets results

[TN Media \[tnmedia.com\]](http://tnmedia.com) team in Nashville started their Market Motive training in June 2013, and in just over six months gained 232 certifications among the 71 team members. Training manager Margaret Tolbert provided insights to their team's success.

"I knew it was something that we all needed. I knew it was information that we needed. I knew it was valuable for us."

Using the Timeline

The roll-out at TN Media was based primarily on the documents and expectations provided by Gannett corporate, including the timeline.

"The Gannett documents were great because we had a timeline, I liked that. It gave us goals and deadlines that we needed to meet. But it was a really aggressive timeline. . . We were committing, on average, 3-4 hours/week. And sure, we got rid of some training sessions and some meetings to do it, but that's still really tough."

Leading by Example & Setting Expectations

Despite it being tough, Tolbert committed herself to meeting the high expectations.

"I went through the training too . . . So I think being able to empathize with them - because myself and the entire management team went through it as well - I think that really helped. If I didn't do it or the managers didn't do it, I don't think it would have been nearly as successful as having our leadership team do it as well."

Because Tolbert and the rest of the leadership team committed themselves to the training, they were able to hold the whole team to the same high standard.

"We didn't leave it up to our team on 'if you want to do this,' it was, 'we're all doing this, and this is when it should be done.'"

The Push: Managing & Communicating Progress

Tolbert developed a routine using the manager dashboard and internal communication to help her keep the team on track.

“Every single Monday, I would go in and see who was on track, and who wasn’t set to complete on time. I would email those people and their managers to say, ‘You are behind, what can I do to help you?’ So it really was just that accountability that kept us to make sure everyone got through it, completed by deadline.”

But the accountability wasn’t limited to emails.

“Through my emails I would send the updates, and then also we have weekly department meetings. So I would do reminders in those weekly department meetings as well. I was communicating all over the place, between the department meetings and the manager meetings, I would talk to the managers about it. And then, of course, my weekly emails and walking around talking to people.”

Some might get deterred by the amount of effort Tolbert seemed to have put into managing their team’s progress, but she thought it was worth the effort.

“I totally felt that it was worth it. I was managing the entire Tennessean, almost 100 sales reps, and I didn’t find it taking too much time out of my day to do that. It was more of a checks and balances. I didn’t feel like it did take that much time. The largest time consumer was me doing the training with them and ahead of them, because the training itself takes the time. But the managing it - that was nothing.”

The Pull: Eyes on the Goal

Tolbert didn’t just rely on pushing those who were behind, she pulled them to a goal and reward. For TN Media team, the reward was OMCP Certification.

“I really kept the team motivated . . . They could see the value of why they have to do this session, instead of just checking another thing off their list. I want them to understand the importance of the information that they’re learning, and the sales application behind it. . . It was strictly off of being OMCP Certified, and the fact that this is something that everyone in Gannett is going through. It was more of an expectation of us, not something you just choose to do. So they all knew it was expected of us to do.”

Developing a Culture

As a result of the clear expectations, constant communication, and Tolbert's motivation, the team got on board. What is structured as individual training turned into a part of the team culture.

"The sales reps did work together to really help each other out. Motivating each other. Giving each other tips as they worked through it."

"I had reps come in this week, in fact, and say, 'You know, from our Market Motive training, I know. . .' and they'll be quoting things from Market Motive and pieces that they've learned. With our more savvy reps, it helped us out more. With some of the reps that were already behind, it's getting them closer to where they need to be."

Results

The TN Media team jumped in with both feet, dedicating significant time and effort to the training. So the big question remains: was it worth it?

"I really do think it helped us with crafting our Pay Per Click pitches. We're doing awesome with PPC. Our sales in 2013 were a major percentage PPC. In 2013, 58% of our digital sales were in PPC, so that was huge for us. Whereas the Gannett average is 51%."

Some of their biggest results correlated to the start of their training initiative.

"Our number of accounts buying digital grew on average about five more accounts, and they were starting to buy more long term starting in June as well. And the dollar amounts were going up as well, starting in June as well. 'Cause we went from total value in May at \$145,000 to in June \$843,000, that was a big jump between those months, and later in the year we still grew."

Progressive teams that invest in training resources, and nurture a learning culture, reap rewards from every angle. TN Media's investments in professional development and a culture of excellence have carried them to a truly successful and satisfying year.