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IBM
VIRTUAL SALES SUMMIT 2020

An immersive enablement experience impacting 5000 sellers globally

PROJECT SUMMARY

When the COVID-19 pandemic led to a sudden shut down of global business in early 2020 and the corporate world shifted immediately to a virtual model of engagement, the IBM Global Technology Services (GTS) Infrastructure Services (IS) team responded quickly. They reimagined what had been planned as a face-to-face sales training session into a four-week virtual experience.

Through the Virtual Sales Summit, the team was able to engage more than 5,000 sellers in their new virtual and remote work environment. The team shared content and tools to equip sellers with IBM's cloud narrative and gave them the tools and information they needed to engage with clients through this new world of consultative selling, virtual selling, and social selling.

The program spanned 15-hours of self-guided digital training and was designed using the analogy of scaling a summit. The sales enablement team created more than 70 tracks tailored to various roles, and the content was available in five different languages.

Sellers were grouped into teams on an expedition, where all team members helped each other reach the top, via learn and practice activities. First, before they even got to basecamp to embark on their journey, sellers had to "acclimatize," by completing pre-work. Then, the ascent to the summit was mapped across five camps, each of which had a unique set of interactive trainings, such as client deal coaching, leadership messages, whiteboarding sessions, interactive role plays, and more. Sellers had to move through each camp and complete an assessment before reaching the summit.

There were three key elements for the successful execution of the Virtual Sales Summit, each with their own scope and deliverables: content, cross-collaboration and engagement, and technology innovation.

1. Content and innovative content delivery methods drove the success of the Virtual Sales Summit. The training leveraged light-boarding, whiteboarding, simulations, videos, role play and expert panel discussions to engage sellers. A highlight was a guided facilitation by Steve Smith, an ex-IBMer and a NASA astronaut. Sellers also received real-time assessments and feedback from first line managers through tools such as Allego, a learning platform. To get an external perspective, the team engaged clients from different geographies to present what they expect from IBM sellers and how IBM client-facing teams can prepare to address client concerns on their transformation with cloud. In addition, the entire experience was gamified, with more than 30 activity-based games on topics such as client engagement tools, profile enhancement on LinkedIn, submitting deal pitch videos, and quizzes. Sellers earned points that they could use to purchase merchandise or buy experiences.

2. The sales enablement team set out to synchronize cross-functional teams across four time zones. They established a management system with regular checkpoints, communication plans, geography briefings, and leadership updates to ensure the learning experience for sellers was seamless. They also leveraged collaboration tools like Box and Slack to share content with all the teams and gamification brought an element of competition and enhanced the content consumption.

3. To effectively enable the sales team on IBM's cloud capabilities and deal activation a user-friendly platform was created using IBM Comprehend, a learning platform to develop and host content. The content could be accessed anytime anywhere on demand by the participants.

The Virtual Sales Summit accelerated outcomes in digital selling, while promoting a healthy and inclusive culture through strong team bonding across geographies. The program approach is now recognized as a best practice at IBM and other business units continue to use it for their enablement efforts.

In addition, the Virtual Sales Summit resulted in:

- 5000+ sellers enabled on IBM's Cloud service capabilities and deal activation expertise
- 37% higher engagement on internal content management system
- 13% increase in seller confidence to position IBM cloud services capabilities
- 3,709 unique opportunities submitted, worth ~$31 billion, by applying learnings from the summit curriculum