



Predicting success and optimizing talent at NISSAN



Founded in Japan in 1933, Nissan is a global automotive manufacturer that needs no introduction. A results-focused company distributing in more than 26 regions around the world, Nissan has strategic and aggressive growth strategies to expand their market share and deliver maximum value to its shareholders.

In 2016 and 2017, the Nissan North America Region sold roughly 2.1 million cars, accounting for about \$6.5B in annual revenue. Nissan has a team of 253 field sales representatives in the USA, who are responsible for a majority of its annual revenue.

Business Opportunity: Demystifying Sales Performance

Nissan knew it needed to critically invest in its North American field sales team. It set out to demystify the factors that led to sales success so it could codify and replicate that success.

In 2014, the automaker appointed Joan Jones, a 27-year Nissan veteran, to lead the charge of training the field sales team. Jones created The Field Sales Academy, through which she sought to:

- Hire and recruit the best people for the field sales team
- Roll out a scalable onboarding program for new team members
- Transform new team members into qualified dealer consultants by improving 1:1 dealer/seller interactions
- Improve selling skills by creating skill benchmarks and actionable development plans

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PI has given me a quantifiable and sustainable approach to predict sales performance.

Joan Jones -Senior Manager at Nissan

Jones sought to bring the same level of metrics-based insight that was experienced in other areas of the business to Nissan’s people processes and strategy. With ambitious revenue goals to meet, she knew that using data to predict sales performance was key.

Solution: A sustainable methodology to optimize performance

In 2017, Jones began working with a PI Certified Partner, to incorporate The Predictive Index® into her Academy. Nissan had been casually using PI as a hiring tool since 2005—but until this point, the automaker hadn't explored PI's robust suite of people management tools.

As the first step in using PI to predict sales performance, a group of Nissan leaders created Job Targets for three important roles on the field sales team: Dealer Operations Manager (DOM), Fixed Operations

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PI protects the manager from making a bad hiring decision and protects the individual from poor performance.

Joan Jones -Senior Manager at Nissan

Manager (FOM), and Financial Service Manager (FSM). As part of this activity, the leaders assessed high-performing DOMs, FOMs, and FSMs to identify key behavioral similarities, and established behavioral and cognitive benchmarks for each role. The result was the creation of three Job Targets.

Step two was to give the PI Behavioral Assessment™ to all 253 current DOM, FOM, and FSM employees. Each was assigned behavioral pattern, based on their assessment answers. Jones then compared the behavioral pattern to the Job Targets that had been previously set. She categorized employees into three groups (green, yellow, and red)

based on how closely they matched the Job Targets.

Next, Jones used the PI Selling Skills Assessment Tool to measure her team's strengths and weaknesses. After looking at the results, Jones realized her team's scores (61) were below industry standard (65). To improve the team's SSAT scores, Jones enrolled the trainees in PI's Customer Focused Selling workshop, led by sales experts and facilitators from a PI Certified Partner.

Results: Predicting high and low performers

Six months after attending the PI Customer Focused Selling workshop, Joan reassessed the trainees with the SSAT and found that their scores had increased by 10 percent, surpassing the industry average.

Beyond an increase in SSAT scores, Jones was able to prove the accuracy and predictability of the Job Targets she worked to establish. Jones looked at the top performers from the field sales team who collectively were selling 106 percent to 116 percent over quota. Out of those top performers, 80 percent were green (a close match to the Job Targets) and 20 percent were yellow (a moderate match to the Job Targets). None of the top-performing employees were red (poor matches to the Job Targets). Jones proved that Job Target match was correlated with high on-the-job performance, but what about the lowest performing field sales representatives?

Of the lowest performing field sales representatives who were only selling at 80 percent of their objective after six months, 70 percent were poor or moderate matches to the Job Targets.

Seeing such significant and directional results got Jones thinking about how much revenue was lost due to poor matches and underperformance. Jones discovered that if each employee had been at least a moderate match to the Job Target, they would have been able to reach 92 percent of their sales objective within six months. **The 12 percent difference between an underperformer and a top performer translates to \$90M loss in revenue.**

Empowered by this data, Jones was able to make a strong case to her HR team that PI and CFS are necessary components of hiring and success for the sales team. Once HR saw the data for themselves, they quickly decided to let PI guide their future hiring processes. Jones had discovered something revolutionary—a proven methodology to predict and optimize sales performance. And this gave Nissan a competitive advantage to help them reach their goals.



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