



PwC - A Case Study

**From Winning the
Argument to Winning
the Deal**

By CIMPLEMENT, Per Cedergren



Case Study - PwC Norway - From Winning the Argument to Winning the Deal

Consistently being ahead of the curve in creating more profitable business by sharpening skills, mindsets and capabilities, and getting more out of existing tools and processes.

PwC is the leading Audit, Advisory and Legal firm in Norway. They want to stay that way.

BACKGROUND

Back in 2009 the financial crisis hit PwC Advisory with full force. All of a sudden “the phone stopped ringing”, new RFP’s were nowhere to be seen, the **pipeline dried up**. Something had to be done. The subsequent analysis indicated that **despite great reputation, tools and**

processes, something was missing: the ability to pro-actively approach the market to create projects, rather than to reactively respond to client requests. This included **shaping the *commercial* mindset.** Using a quote from a participant:

“We were not the first in line when God handed out sales capabilities”.

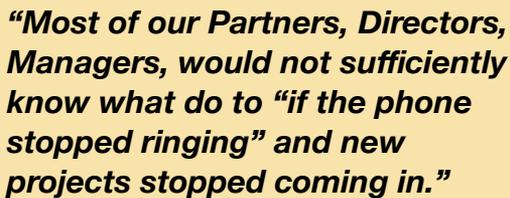
The subsequent program we delivered with the Advisory division in 2010 sharpened those **Value Selling Skills**, and the capability to help the client discover their own needs, translating those needs to PwC solutions and orchestrate the decision-making process. In essence **to make the PwC sales framework Pursuit come alive.** More on the “how” below.

Starting FY 2019 PwC Norway installed a **new leadership team** with Leif Arne Jensen, Assurance, and Petter Vold, Advisory, leading the **1,700 people strong firm in Norway.** One of their first identified areas for improvement was the **lack of Sales Culture.** This was partly a **luxury problem.** **There was no need to be super-sharp,** quote:

“after what your firm did with us in 2010, we have been tremendously successful in the market, not only thanks to those skills, but also the economy has been booming”.

The public sector in Norway has strong purchasing power, driven by the oil riches. At this moment the Government Pension Fund Norway (commonly known as the “oil fund”) has **over US \$1 trillion in assets, accounting for a whopping 1.4% of ALL worldwide shares**, making it the world’s largest sovereign wealth fund.

Being pro-active, the new leadership identified the risk that this relatively complacent attitude towards sales could jeopardize future growth and thus also affect the retention of key talents. Quote from early 2019:



“Most of our Partners, Directors, Managers, would not sufficiently know what do to “if the phone stopped ringing” and new projects stopped coming in.”

We do not want to be caught off guard, as we were in 2009. Now is the time to instill a strong Sales Culture in the entire firm, starting with the 150 Partners, so we are well equipped and prepared if and when the economy goes south at any point during the coming years.”and so it did, with Covid-19 in 2020.

SOLUTION

PwC has excellent sales tools and processes, Pursuit and Sales Force being the cornerstones. The project with PwC Norway is the **catalyst to get more out of those existing tools.** Using a golf analogy: “just to *buy the best golf clubs will get you nowhere, if you don’t also practice and play on a regular basis*”.

The program all 150 Partners now attend gives everyone the opportunity to experience very challenging client situations in a secure environment, an environment where each mistake offers the upside, i.e. a great learning experience, and not the downside, i.e. lost business, lost trust, lost relations. **The exercises are very challenging, frequently revealing that our mindset and behavior is not always in line with what we know we should do.** Despite good intentions it’s human to **pick a fight** rather than to build and collaborate with the clients when the going gets tough. **Our feeling brain takes over.**

We tend to judge ourselves by our good intentions, and others by their actions, so many leaders resort to excuses when their behavior is not up to their own high ideals, often killing their own learning process if not challenged.

Our unique didactic method ensures that this “excuse tendency” is minimized, and that a self-coaching capability is strengthened for each Partner.

As for the logistics, the program is one year with **quarterly sessions lasting 2 days**, where each new session **starts with a report-back on the best results achieved**. In each new session we will then test how well the mindset and skills that were practiced in the previous session(s) has **been internalized** (and if not, it's a strong "wake up call"). To ensure maximum impact and openness the **group size is limited to 10 Partners per group**, i.e. for this project there are 15 groups of 10 Partners, each led by a consultant from our side. All of us have **at least 20 years of experience working with professional services firms**. The project will run until September 2020 (*Remark: due to COVID-19 the final session of the project is postponed until August 2021*). Here are a couple of quotes after the third session:

"Our livelihood depends on us being able to build trust with clients and market and sell our skills. It is especially important that partners are adept at selling and also have the right mindset and attitudes in order to train the next generation leaders and salesforce. This must be instituted as an ongoing program to stay top-of-mind, and not a one-time effort."

Aase Lindahl, Partner

"I have won two new major customers in recent months. In fact, I do not think I would have landed these sales unless I had participated in this sales training."

Frode Holthe, Partner

KEY RESULTS*

- This program is a **catalyst** for getting more out of our existing tools: **Pursuit** and **Salesforce**
- We now have a **common language**, a common mindset and a common skills-set in sales
- The new common language in sales means we can immediately give feedback to each other
- Since the common language is simplified, we all know what to look for and can uphold it
- Everyone knows what to do when, for instance, you say: “dig deeper” (for supporting signals) and “use your ‘yes, and attitude’ ” for handling push-back and orchestrating client meetings.
- Partners that already were on a high level, having a strong solution-oriented mindset and strong sales skills, report they not only **enjoyed the training the most**, they also learned the most, further mastering the art of sales and negotiations.
- The program has also sharpened the ability to handle **rough weather** situations internally, such as coaching and giving feedback to colleagues that do not live the desired culture and are not performing to the desired level
- One of the most rewarding parts of the program has been the sharpening of **self-coaching skills**, a skill that is paramount for **succeeding** and learning in the market
- The program has also contributed to increased appreciation of each-others added value, both in client-facing situations and working together as a country partnership.

- We have gone through so many “rough weather” situations together in the program, that we now have a stronger appreciation for each other and our **unique capabilities**.

**after 80 % completion of the project, due to COVID-19 the last session remains to be delivered.*

"We're in the fortunate position of having a strong brand name, and yet with the increasing competition we have to stay on our toes and have the sharpest Partners and attract the best talent. To succeed we chose to partner with Per Cedergren and Cimplement. They understand the need of professional services firms and the results far exceed the investment"

***Petter Vold
Managing Partner PwC, Norway***



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About Per Cedergren



Cimplement's founder is Per Cedergren, of many considered the number one leadership - and sales trainer, certified in a unique methodology and awarded *Excellent Sales Award 10 times*, and personal coach to CEO's and Professionals globally.

Mr Cedergren is a specialist in training Top Executives and international Management Teams to "Walk the talk" and be role models in their daily behaviors. Active since 1993.