

## Observational Coaching Boosts Star Performer RBC Even Higher

### The Client

Royal Bank of Canada is Canada's largest bank in terms of assets and market capitalization. RBC has more than 14 million personal, business, and public sector clients, assets of \$586 billion, 70,000 employees in 34 countries, 1,443 branches, and 4,232 ATMs.

### The Winning Management Team

Rob Johnston is RBC's Head of Sales Strategy and Support, reporting to Anne Lockie, Executive Vice President of Sales, RBC Banking.

### The Success Story

Royal Bank of Canada is no stranger to customer-related success. RBC has long enjoyed a well-earned international reputation for sales-and-service breakthroughs, a customer-centric culture, and a commitment to employee training.

So when Rob Johnston, RBC's Head of Sales Strategy and Support, says that "*Observational Coaching* is proving to be pivotal in our reaching even higher levels of performance," he is worth listening to. His bank is in the early stages of rolling out Cohen Brown Management Group's *Professional Sports Coaching for Business* program, called *Observational Coaching* at RBC.

It is a massive rollout. Johnston manages the bank's sales coach positions, including regional managers who coach regional presidents and sales advisors, and sales specialists who coach front-line managers and sales-and-service professionals. He reports to Anne Lockie, Executive Vice President of Sales, RBC Banking, which includes retail, commercial, private banking, and commissioned sales professionals, involving more than 1,100 branches, 100 commercial banking centres, and 5 call centres for a total of more than 30,000 employees.

To support RBC's ongoing efforts to strengthen its leadership position in Canada, Johnston recognized the need for RBC employees to increase their up-selling and cross-selling skills and further recognized that would require a superior level of coaching and training.

After considering a variety of coaching training options, Johnston said, "What I saw in the Cohen Brown program was the power of *observation*. When you're dealing with already skilled salespeople and trying to lift them to a truly superior level, general coaching is not going to be effective. What they need is highly specific advice on precise skills, and that comes strictly from personal observation. Cohen Brown was flexible enough to help us tailor to our needs the two modules we wanted to deploy first: *Observations* and *Observational Feedback*."

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### How They Did It

The sessions were leader-led – that is, facilitated by top executives from RBC including Anne Lockie and the regional presidents. The full scope of RBC’s business units are participating across Canada – retail, commercial, call centres, commissioned sales, and private banking.

From his own personal experience using Sports Coaching, Johnston notes, “I am more focused on coaching to specific outcomes in every coaching intervention. I ask myself, ‘What performance result do I want to achieve, and what are the most important skills or micro-skills the employee needs to achieve that performance?’ I gear my coaching sessions accordingly.”

### What Participating Managers Are Saying

Johnston considers it too early in the process to draw definitive correlations between the program and financial results, but he professes to be “very encouraged” by the responses from managers being coached and other early indicators of success.

- A regional president said, “*Observational Coaching* is an enabler for our success around our priority of delighting our client.”
- A branch manager said, “Now my bankers are coming to me and asking for coaching, which they didn’t do in the past.”
- A regional vice president said, “I was out of ideas for how I could help some of my managers improve their performance and reach their goals this year. I had tried everything. Now, with *Observational Coaching*, I have something concrete that I know will work to make a difference.”
- A senior manager, referring to his sales teams, captured the precision and efficiency that are hallmarks of *Professional Sports Coaching*: “Instead of boiling the ocean, they learned to work the pond by coaching the things that will make the most difference in performance.”
- Managers at all levels have said that they knew they were supposed to observe their employees, but in the past, they really did not know how to do this. Now they have learned how to observe and identify what employees are doing correctly as well as specific opportunities for improvement, and they know how to provide precise and candid coaching feedback.

### Positive Trends in Product and Account Volumes

Conventional measures are uniformly positive just months into the deployment, with positive trends in Average Products and Services, net new Personal Deposit Accounts, and net new Business Deposit Accounts year over year.

Early returns notwithstanding, Johnston maintains that he is focused on long-term, sustained gains: “We have thousands of employees and a ten-year enterprise license with Cohen Brown. We intend to embed this new capability to accelerate the skill proficiency of the sales force over the long term. That in turn will increase our business results and enable RBC to deliver a superior client experience.

“After all, our vision is ‘Always earning the right to be our clients’ first choice.’ With *Observational Coaching*, we have another powerful tool that helps us earn that right.”