



Business Case Praxis ‘Frequent practice is essential’

Customer (un)friendliness

Customer friendliness is high on the agenda of many Retail companies. But what if the customer is not friendly, or even aggressive? There are 600 of these incidents every day in The Netherlands, meaning this is a real problem. This has been reason enough for Praxis, a large Dutch DIY chain, to train their employees in handling aggression. In 2014 the training was heavily revised in collaboration with TrainTool and Crime Control, says Head of Personal Development Merel Vollenberg.



In this case study Merel Vollenberg, Head of Personal Development at Praxis, will talk about the training ‘Handling aggression’ that was established and executed in collaboration with TrainTool and Crime Control.

Customer orientation in practice.

Why an aggression training?

Frustration and aggression occur on the floor at Praxis as well. Solving these situations in a positive way is part of customer orientation, according to Merel Vollenberg. “Making sure your staff is defensible against aggression and violence, so that their safety and that of other colleagues and customers is secured, is also a large part of being a good employer.” That’s why Praxis looked for a collaboration with the Belgian Crime Control and TrainTool. “We want our employees to turn aggression into something positive. Or at least to be able to guarantee their own safety and that of our customers and colleagues when things do escalate.”

You’ll only become skilled from practice

Handling aggression is a skill, and Vollenburg feels that putting the learned skill into practice is the best way to improve your skill. “The 70-20-10 model is widely known: we occupy 10% of our time with formal learning, for example, driving lessons. But if you only had lessons, you will not be a perfectly skilled driver. You’ll get there in the other 70% of the time: by practicing. By driving regularly you will refine that skill and keep it at the right level. If you don’t, the skill will fade away. This is why we expect forklift drivers to drive a forklift frequently, salesmen to have much contact with the customer and managers to converse with their employees.”

Frequent practice.

Preferring not to put it to practice

There is a paradox in training how to handle aggression: you’d prefer the employees never having to put the skill to practice, as it would mean that they are confronted with a lot of aggression. “So the question is this: how will your employees become skilled in behaviour they will, hopefully, never or rarely need? By ensuring that this is incorporated into the 10%. You can influence, organise and direct it as an employer.”

Blended training

The aggression training at Praxis used to be a traditional training: a classroom training of one day. This isn’t optimal, according to Vollenberg, as there is no time for frequent application, spread over time. “This is why we chose to use a blended aggression training. It offered us the possibility to spread out the training over a longer period of time, with more frequent practice.” Praxis has chosen Crime Control’s substantive expertise and TrainTool’s usability.

This is how it works.

Own learning objectives

The training starts in the first week with a general welcome, and the participants could watch some videos. So, very accessible. Crime Control assessed two intake exercises. 'Not saying it was either wrong or right, but to suggest areas of improvement.'

Therewith, the participant gets some grip on his or her own learning curve and learning objectives. The first weeks are focused on frustration-aggression and instrumental aggression, and it moves on to assault prevention in week three.

A certificate within six weeks

The classroom training happens in week four. "It consists of half a day of intensive practicing. The participants were in direct contact with the trainer too." All components of the training are mixed and repeated in week five, and there is a final exam with theoretical questions and video exercises in week 6. "Those who pass the exam, receive a certificate. Those who fail, receive feedback from the trainer and then they can improve their scores in a resit. Almost all of them pass."

"We are very happy with the pass rate of 90%"

The results

90% of participants passes in one go and the average score on the final exam is an 8,9. "We have achieved these results together and we are very happy with that!" concludes Vollenberg.

The total programme.



Answering some practical questions.

On what devices is the training offered?

“Employees can choose the device which they use to do the training. TrainTool’s app is very user-friendly and many employees chose to do the training on their own device.”

Were the participants enthusiastic right away?

“The training was mandatory for new employees who work at the check-out or in an executive job. A large part of this group is made out of students who are working with us on Saturdays. They have a high acceptance rate. This set-up has many features of social learning: you can share your videos with peers and a trainer who you’ll meet in the classroom training. So you’re in this together, and you’re not on your own. It lowers the threshold.”

A question for Stephanie Van Baele (Crime Control)

How are the participants assessed?

“There are videos in the exercises where you can see an aggressive customer, and the participants react to it via their webcam. The participant therefore reacts to what he or she has seen and will receive feedback on that reaction. For example, did he or she use the different components of the sandwich-method? With yet another method we look for listening, acknowledging and solving the problem on the part of the participant. Each of these skills can be scored as ‘absent’, ‘moderately present’ and ‘present’. This leads to a large number of assessments on distinct skills.”

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