

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

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A REVIEW OF VIRTUAL LEARNING METHODOLOGY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SALES WORKFORCE

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ABSTRACT

This research paper analyzes the application of virtual learning methodology (VLM) in the training and development of the sales workforce in telecom industry. The Indian Telecom market is growing at the rate of 18% p.a. and the fierce competition at the marketplace demands a highly skilled and competent sales workforce. As a part of the study, a survey of 133 sales managers was conducted using a structured and non-standard questionnaire based on likert scale. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the two hypotheses were tested using non parametric tests. The research findings would be beneficial to practicing training managers for imparting training programs for high impact learning for a geographically dispersed sales force.

KEYWORDS

Sales Training, Sales workforce, Training Effectiveness, Training Framework, Virtual Learning Methodology.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Telecom Industry has grown substantially over the last decade due to the liberalization policies of the government, extensive need for communication, favorable demographic outlook and the political stability. The market was dominated by public sector organizations until 1991 but the liberalization of the industry opened the doors to the private players. New Telecom policies of 1994 and 1999 revolutionized the industry and many foreign operators started their operations in the country. The Indian telecom network is currently the 3rd largest in the world and the 2nd largest in Asia.

The industry provides a variety of solutions related to voice, data, Value Added Services (VAS), entertainment, network and passive infrastructure etc. Telecom operators have deployed number of cutting edge technologies like Global System for Mobile communication (GSM - 2G/3G), Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA), General Packet Radio Service (GPRS), Enhanced Data-rates for Global Evolution (EDGE), High Speed Data (HSD), Evolution Data Optimized (EVDO), Universal Mobile Telecommunication System (UMTS), High Speed Packet Access (HSPA), Long Term Evolution (LTE), Wireless Inter-operability for Microwave Access (WiMAX), Next Generation Network (NGN), Synchronous Digital Hierarchy (SDH), Dense Wavelength Digital Multiplexing (DWDM) and Metro Ethernet Network (MEN) on their network in order to offer a host of products and services such as Fixed Wireless Phone (FWP), Fixed Landline Phone (FLP), Mobile phones (prepaid and postpaid), 3G Tabs, data cards, Direct To Home (DTH), Internet Protocol Television (IPTV), Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), broadband, leased lines, Internet Data Center (IDC), Virtual Private Network (VPN) and cloud computing etc. The industry has a segmented customer base and organizations use diverse channels like Enterprise / Corporate, Retail, Direct and Mass Distribution for reaching out to the customers.

The Learning Center (LC) of a leading telecom player in India, an ISO 9001:2008 certified entity, is actively engaged in providing learning solutions to employees and other stakeholders using various methodologies which includes instructor led training programs through regular and virtual classroom sessions, webcast, audio broadcasting and Self Learning Modules (SLMs). The virtual classroom sessions are facilitated using audio and video conferencing technologies and SLMs (animated presentation with voice over) provide self paced learning solutions to the employees. The LC portfolio contains over 250 instructor led training (ILT) and 92 self learning modules (SLMs) on different technologies, telecom equipments, behavioral and generic soft skills. The entity has trained and developed more than 32000 employees over the last nine years using following state-of-the-art learning models:

- Accelerated Learning Solutions (ALS)
- Blended Learning
- 3Ts Model (Telecommunication, Technology and Training)

The ALS program accelerates the learning curve of fresh engineering graduates by engaging them to learn, develop and enhance their on-the-job productivity and performance by a combination of Instructor led Classroom and Distance Learning Training Programs, On-line Interactive Self Learning Modules, On-the-job Mentoring, Cross Functional training, Job rotation and Enrichment, Project Presentation, Certifications, Quizzes, Workshops, Seminars and Conclaves.

The Blended Learning model uses a mix of conventional instructor led training (ILT) – direct as well as over audio/video conference for theory, product and services hands-on, supplemented by SLMs. All the modules include an evaluation mechanism to validate employee learning (Ram, Warier, & Krishnan, 2012).

3Ts model is a cost effective learning solution in comparison with conventional and virtual classroom techniques. It is tempered with a voluntary self learning and mandatory certification mechanism, thereby increasing its effectiveness and creating a learning organization. The model goes beyond traditional e-learning and is an amalgamation of online learning, virtual learning, distributed learning, networked or web-based learning techniques (Verma, Warier, & Krishnan, 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review has been undertaken to analyze the various aspects of the subject and the key works and models that are pertinent to the study have been reproduced in this section.

In many cases, training efforts focus exclusively on skills and techniques. While these elements are essential to good training, if there is no process 'backbone' to attach new practices to, the new methods are applied sporadically and soon fall into disuse. In essence, new skills fail to 'stick' without a committed change in the overall sales approach and philosophy. The application of new methods is typically reduced to a few good ideas gleaned from the training at an individual level. Many initiatives (and training vendors) apply a partial or fragmented training approach that fails to address specific types of learning. Simply providing 'blended' learning that is comprised of instructor led and eLearning courses may not improve retention and application results. An appropriate blend of controlled learning 'events', on-demand resources, 'push' reinforcement, and on-the-job learning is required to meet the needs of next generation sales professionals (Sales Performance International, 2010).

Most sales training is focused around a two- or three-day event where salespeople learn and practice new skills. The problem with event-only training is that the effects of the event fade. Without reinforcement, it's nearly impossible to make learning stick. Then you don't get the changes in behavior and increased performance results you're looking for. With event-only training, after short-term bumps in sales improvement, salespeople forget learned skills and knowledge, forget how inspired and motivated they were given what they covered, and the learning effectiveness decreases. Indeed, ES Research estimates that 85 percent to 90 percent of sales training fails after 120 days because the sales training is not reinforced (Schultz, 2012).

Corporate managers are constantly looking for more cost-effective ways to deliver training to their employees. E-learning is less expensive than traditional classroom instruction. Many expenses like booking training facilities, travel costs for employees or trainers, plus employee time away from the job etc. are greatly reduced. In addition to positive economic benefits, advantages such as convenience, standardized delivery, self-paced learning and variety of available content, have made e-learning a high priority for many corporations (Strother, 2002).

The majority of trainers we work with differentiate themselves in tenders by simply offering an online training module. When someone thinks about online training, it sometimes surprises that this is a differentiator in itself. But the fact is that the majority of trainers still don't offer it which, especially in the training of soft skills, provides a big opportunity. Almost all corporations feel they should offer their employees the opportunity to train their skills anywhere, anytime (Reijden, 2012).

A brief discussion of the underlying principles behind distance learning is necessary to understand the associated problems. In 1973 Moore introduced the theory of independent study. An important foundation of distance education, it suggests that successful teaching can take place even though teacher and learner are physically separated during the learning process. This separation can occur in several ways depending on the nature of the course content and delivery medium. Because of the competing priorities of work, home, and school, adult learners desire a high degree of flexibility. The structure of distance learning gives adults the greatest possible control over the time, place and pace of education; however, it is not without problems. Technology has also changed the face of education. Advances in telecommunications technology has opened up the possibility of personal and group interaction in distance education (Galusha, 1997).

The US army has taken a paradigm shift in its training methodology to provide self driven learning solutions to soldiers. The Army plans to convert over 500 courses to a distance learning format, delivering training to a soldier when needed. As described in the Total Army Distance Learning Plan, in the 21st Century, soldiers will attend streamlined resident courses, preparing themselves through diagnostic-driven, self-paced distance learning modules delivered at home station in unit learning centers, at the job site, or in their residence. In recent years, there has been an escalating interest on the part of academia, industry, as well as the military to shift from the traditional face-to-face classroom to a distance learning format. This shift has been driven by an interest in reducing training costs while increasing accessibility (Wisher et al., 1999).

One of the few generalizations that can be made about any distance learning program – whatever the communications media used and the content level – is that a good monitoring and evaluation system is likely to lead to a successful program, and a poor system is almost certain to lead to failure (Moore, 1999). The three key features of a good system are as follows:

- The preliminary specification of good learning objectives, with this crucial question at the heart: Did each participant produce evidence of having learned what was required as specified in the learning objectives? If not, why not?
- The construction and handling of assignments, which are the participants' evidence of learning and an important source of feedback for the program
- A good data gathering and reporting system and a solid review of all of the data by both instructors and program administrators

It is a daunting task to maintain an educated, high-performance workforce in today's global economy. Increased competition, regulatory bodies, changing technology, and process re-engineering conspire to disrupt traditional employee practice and capability. The need for training, retraining and lifelong learning by professionals, demands that continuing education and staff development accommodate diverse learning environments, including the home, office or offsite conference room. To meet such demands, organizations and businesses are relying on communications technology and distance learning to deliver training (Schreiber & Berge, 1998).

Schreiber and Berge (1998) have also proposed a model for technology based learning. This model employs a reiterative process of analysis and design and is derived from the theories of instructional systems development and conceptual frameworks of learning. The goal is to maximize utilization of technology and institutionalize an organization's distance training efforts:

- Analyze business needs
- Identify strategic distance training events and programs
- Apply conceptual frameworks of learning to distance training
- Identify and select delivery tools (develop organizational technology plan)
- Correlate distance learning instructional materials to technology delivery tools
- Secure implementation support
- Implement a balanced roll-out strategy
- Evaluate distance learning processes and measure transfer

Attwell (2006) has discussed the variables that affect the learning when it comes to the use of technology in training:

Individual learner

- Physical characteristics (e.g. age, sex, physical abilities)
- Learning history (negative/positive experience, level of attainment, duration, recency etc.)
- Learner attitude (positive/negative)
- Learner motivation (high/low)
- Familiarity with the technology

Learning environment

- The immediate (physical) learning environment
- The organizational or institutional environment
- The subject environment

Contextual

- Socio-economic factors (e.g. class, gender,)
- The political context (e.g. who is funding/ paying for the e-learning and for what reason?)
- Cultural background (e.g. how highly is learning/e-learning valued?)
- Geographic location (e.g. country, language, urban/rural)

Technology

- Hardware
- Software
- Connectivity
- Media
- Mode of delivery

Pedagogic

- Level and nature of learner support systems
- Accessibility issues
- Methodologies
- Flexibility
- Learner autonomy
- Selection and recruitment
- Assessment and examination

- Accreditation and certification

Managers from around the world are constantly trying to do more with less. The service or product they provide demand faster delivery, more variety, and better quality. Training and development practices are constantly adapting to new technology. The collaboration enabled via computers helps eliminate miscommunication. Project managers have discovered that they can be 'on the same page' even when they are not in the same room or geographical location. Learning and certification that can be done online can shorten training timelines. The latest information, knowledge and skills can be communicated instantly (Applied Training Solutions.com, 2012).

MODELS

a) Kirkpatrick's Model (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006)

The 4 levels of the model are as under:

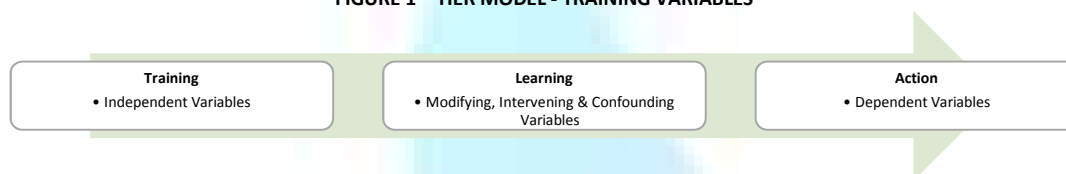
- **Level 1: Reaction** – It indicates the feedback of the participants with regard to the coverage, deliverability, content, presentation and duration of the program
- **Level 2: Learning** – The purpose of this stage is to obtain information on the amount of learning by the trainees. Getting feedback in an organized manner helps in correct and valuable evaluation
- **Level 3: Behavior** – It measures changes in on-the-job behavior. It is very important to give time to learners to reflect their learning on their work place
- **Level 4: Results** – Evaluation at this level consists of an attempt to measure aspects of the effects of trainee's job behavior –whether on productivity or efficiency of trainee's department

Training effectiveness dashboard will give real-time reporting of above measures for HR, line managers and executives. This will simplify and visualize key report data to facilitate faster decision-making. Training progress is also available via dashboard which provides a complete overview of all training variables.

b) TIER Model (NIOSH, 1999)

The TIER model (training intervention effectiveness research model) regards five types of study variables as integral to training effectiveness research: independent, dependent, modifying, intervening, and confounding variables (figure 1).

FIGURE 1 – TIER MODEL - TRAINING VARIABLES



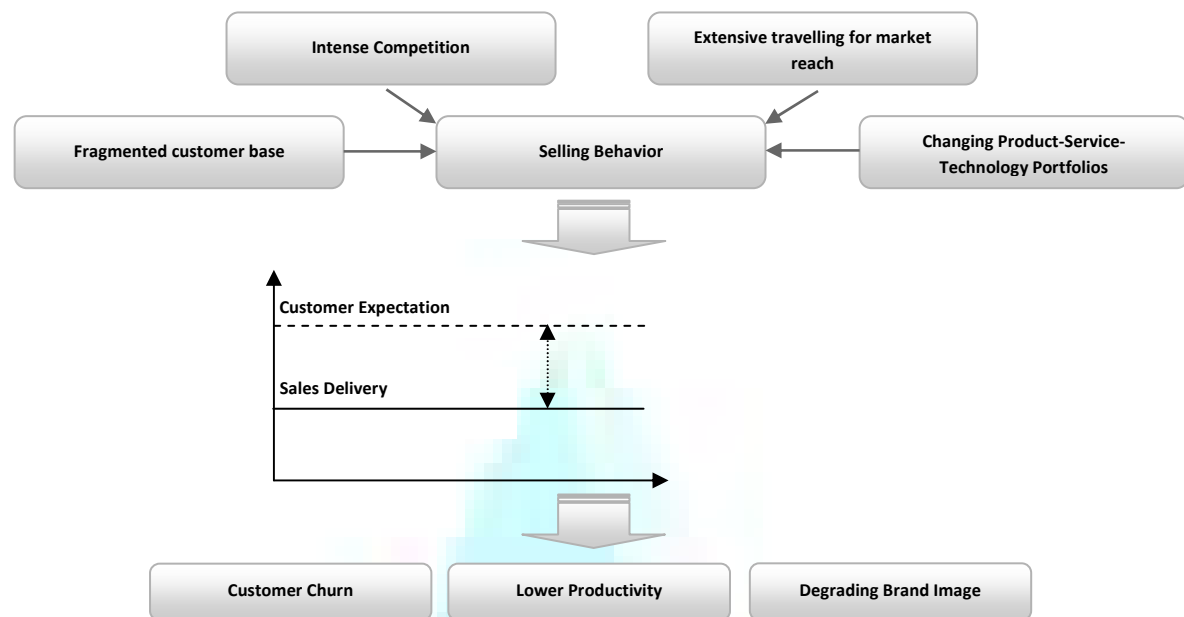
- **Independent Variables** are the manipulated variables—that is, the training inputs and activities that are implemented and studied. They are presumed to cause or influence certain training outcomes. Depending on the study, independent variables could include timing, format, and location of training as well as modifications to the training rationale, content, or educational approach under study
- **Dependent Variables** are the intended aims of training, which are expected to result from exposure to the independent variables. As exposure varies, results may differ, allowing effectiveness to be measured. The model differentiates between dependent variables that are immediate effects of training (termed "outcomes") and dependent variables that are later-emerging effects of training (termed "impacts"). Sample outcomes of training include participant satisfaction with the course; changes in knowledge, attitude, and behavioral intent; and demonstrated skills or abilities. Sample impacts of training include the following: diffusion of course material into the field, retention of knowledge and attitudes, transfer of behavioral intent into practice, application of learned skills and abilities, transfer of training to new populations, and acceptance of instructional content as normal operating procedure
- **Modifying Variables** can modify the influence of independent variables on dependent variables. Therefore, to preserve the integrity of results, modifying variables must be controlled or neutralized for all study conditions. Learner variables (age, sex, socioeconomic status, etc.), trainer variables (experience, teaching style, etc.), and context variables (class size, classroom instruction versus apprenticeship training, etc.) can all modify learning outcomes. Typically, when modifying variables are suspected, research design techniques such as stratified sample selection can be used to control and study their effects on dependent variables
- **Intervening Variables** are inferred concepts intended to explain the processes between stimulus (independent variables) and response (dependent variables). Intervening variables cannot be meaningfully observed, manipulated, or measured. In educational research, such constructs frequently relate to learner attentiveness, ability and motivation to learn, learning style, and individual coping mechanisms when ingesting new material. Intervening variables may also pertain to (1) the trainer's ability to engage learners with the subject matter, and (2) contextual attributes such as the structure and formality of the educational environment. Random selection and assignment of subjects are presumed to control for most intervening variables
- **Confounding Variables** act synergistically with the independent variables and thus are suspected of altering the effects on the dependent variables. Factors beyond the learner's control can influence training outcomes. Therefore, confounding variables can bias the interpretation of data. Possible confounding variables in effectiveness research are changes in institutional policy, implementation of new technologies, and other non training factors that could influence dependent variables. Again, controls applied to sample selection, research design, and data analysis can identify and compensate for the effects of concurrent exposure to multiple causative agents

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In a dynamic telecom market environment, the sales workforce has to continuously enhance the skills to enjoy a competitive advantage. The sales managers have to ensure that their team members are fully up-to-date with the rapidly changing technology-product-service portfolio. To manage such a large number of channel partners, distributors and sales workforce, the sales managers must have a complete understanding of go-to-market strategies.

The selling behavior in the telecom industry is getting impacted by intense competition, extensive travelling and continuously changing product-service-technology portfolios. Consequently, there is a clear gap between the customer expectations and the sales delivery. Sales workforce is unable to convert the sales advantage into sales proposition due to lack of understanding of products and services. Figure 2 shows how all these factors are impacting the brand image, productivity and revenue of the organizations.

FIGURE 2: CHANGING SELLING BEHAVIOUR AND ITS IMPACT



The Indian telecom industry requires a highly techno-savvy, product and market centric sales workforce that can cover the length and breadth of the country through various distribution channels geographically spread across various states, zones, districts, towns and villages. The key problem areas pertaining to the research are summarized below:

- Organizations find it challenging to provide learning solutions to such a geographically dispersed sales workforce using conventional learning techniques only. The need for extensive market reach necessitates considerable travel which is an impediment for classroom training
- High cost and time involved in the travelling to attend the classroom training is another factor which needs to be addressed. The sales workforce operates out of various non-office locations spread across the marketplace. Classroom training has an adverse impact on the availability of the sales workforce
- The industry has an ever changing technology, product and service portfolio and hence the training solutions need to be innovative

OBJECTIVES

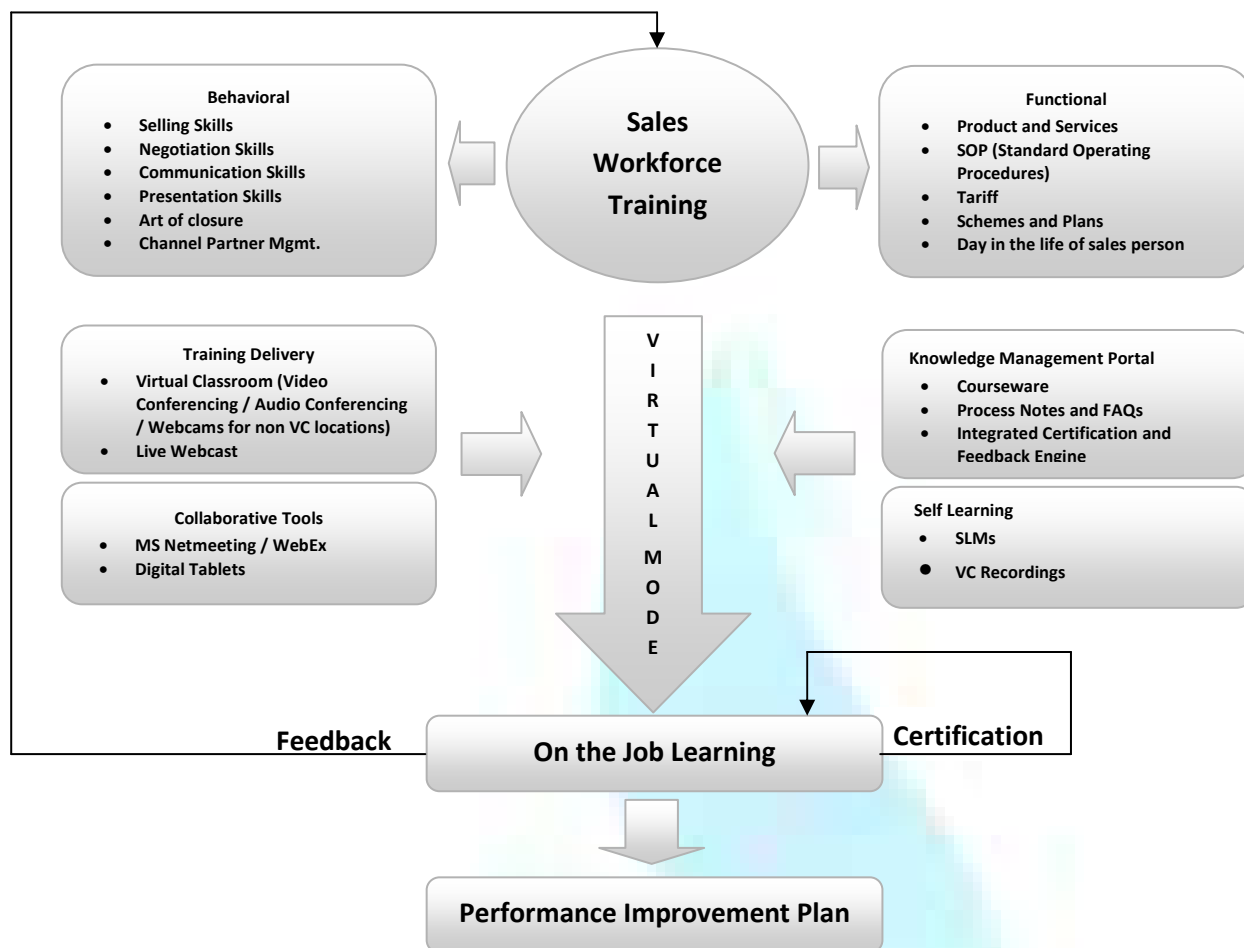
The primary objective of this research is to analyze the application of virtual learning methodology (VLM) for the training and development of sales workforce in the telecom industry. The specific objectives are listed hereunder:

- To create and validate a virtual learning framework for field sales workforce
- To evaluate the effectiveness of VLM for the training of sales workforce and establish a linkage with learning and competency development

VIRTUAL LEARNING FRAMEWORK

This research paper aims to provide a holistic learning framework that bridges this gap by deploying a model that transcends geographical barriers and facilitates competency development of the sales workforce. The fundamental framework used for the sales workforce training through virtual learning methodology (VLM) is shown in figure 3. The sales managers, distributors, channel partners and other sales team members were trained on different behavioral and functional aspects using this framework for a period of three months as a part of the study. The behavioral training covered soft skills such as selling, negotiation, communication, presentation, art of closure, leadership, supervisory and channel partner management etc. The functional aspects related to products, services, process, tariff, schemes, plans were also covered in the training. All the training programs were designed and developed in alignment with the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and channel specific requirements.

FIGURE 3: VIRTUAL LEARNING FRAMEWORK



The training programs were delivered through different virtual modes such as virtual classroom (Video conferencing / audio conferencing) and webcasting. Participants joined the training program from their respective locations, or in some cases from their workplace, using the video conferencing facilities or even with a webcam and a speaker phone (from non VC locations). Trainers drove the sessions using collaborative aids like Microsoft Netmeeting, WebEx and digital tablets to simulate a classroom experience. A dedicated knowledge management portal was designed for the purpose of information and courseware sharing, training calendar display and to provide a platform for the integrated certification and feedback engine. Recordings of virtual classroom sessions, Self Learning Modules (SLMs) and deferred webcasts were also made available on the portal to drive the self learning for sales workforce. Besides this, a helpdesk was created to resolve participants' queries and sponsors were appointed in all the geographies and they were responsible for the end-to-end facilitation and administration of training delivery, nominations and attendance, IT and other logistics in their respective geographies. The sponsors were aligned with the trainers throughout the training.

The participants were mandated to take certification test and provide feedback after each training program. The findings from the feedback analysis were incorporated to further develop and enhance learning solutions. The post training assessment scores were used to identify learning gaps of participants and also formed a part of their performance improvement plan.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As a part of the study, sales managers, sales executives, distributors and channel partners from different distribution channels were trained over a period of three months through different virtual learning modes. The training covered functional and behavioral aspects as described in the conceptual framework section (Figure 3). The courseware was tailor-made to serve channel specific needs and post training, all the participants were mandated to provide feedback and undertake a certification test. The impact study was done at the end of three months to ascertain the effectiveness of training using VLM. The methodology used for the research is described in table 1.

TABLE 1: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

S.N	Parameter	Value
1	Type of Research	Empirical
2	Length of Study	3 months
3	Research Instrument	Structured and Non Standard Questionnaire
4	Survey Administration	Email and Telephonic
5	Instrument Validity Testing	Cronbach Alpha
6	Sampling Type	Purposive and Judgmental Sampling
7	Sample Size	133
8	Analysis	Descriptive, Spearman's Co-relation and Cronbach Alpha
9	Hypothesis Testing	Non Parametric Test - Kolmogorov-Smirnov

SAMPLING DESIGN

A purposive sampling technique was used for the study. The sample included 133 sales managers from different sales and distribution channels (Appendix 2).

DATA COLLECTION

The primary data was collected through the administration of a structured and non-standard questionnaire (Appendix 1) using emails and telephonic calls.

ASSUMPTIONS

- Sales managers are representative of the entire sales population

- The findings of the study could be extended to all the business units of an organization
- The sales training processes and requirements are uniform across the telecom industry

LIMITATIONS

- The sampling size is a major limitation of the study
- The sample is restricted to a specific business unit of a leading telecom player in India

HYPOTHESES

H1: VLM imparts a holistic learning experience to the sales workforce to discharge their on-the-job responsibilities

H2: VLM promotes learning and results in the competency development of the sales workforce

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data collected through the responses was collated and tabulated. The parameters tested, the tests employed and the tables listing the results are as listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2: TESTS USED FOR DATA ANALYSIS

S.N	Parameter	Test	Table
1	Descriptive Statistics	Mean, Std. Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis	Table 4
2	Reliability Testing	Cronbach Alpha	Table 5, 6 and 7
3	Data Correlation	Spearman's Correlation	Table 8 and 9
4	Hypothesis Testing	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Table 10

Table 3 provides the response count summary of different questions used in the research instrument. The data was subsequently analyzed using SPSS Statistics Ver. 20 software. The tests validated both the hypotheses.

TABLE 3: QUESTION WISE RESPONSES

Question	Response					Weighted Avg.
	5	4	3	2	1	
Q1	50	76	6	1	0	4.32
Q2	53	71	6	3	0	4.31
Q3	2	34	39	40	18	2.71
Q4	13	58	27	27	7	3.33
Q5	35	72	16	7	2	3.99
Q6	55	68	8	1	0	4.34
Q7	68	60	3	1	1	4.45
Q8	29	87	15	1	0	4.09
Q9	39	80	8	4	1	4.15
Q10	36	82	13	2	0	4.14
Q11	40	82	11	0	0	4.22

Descriptive Analysis

Table 4 shows the descriptive data analysis of the responses collected through the survey. This includes mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis. Skewness is used for distribution analysis and is indicative of a sign of asymmetry and deviation from a normal distribution. All 11 questions indicate negative skewness.

TABLE 4: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Questions	N	Mean		Std. Deviation		Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Q1	133	4.32	.210	.595	.210	-.455	.210	.628	.417
Q2	133	4.31	.210	.665	.210	-.912	.210	1.616	.417
Q3	133	2.71	.210	1.041	.210	-.056	.210	-.955	.417
Q4	133	3.30	.210	1.108	.210	-.553	.210	-.360	.417
Q5	133	3.96	.210	.924	.210	-1.385	.210	2.994	.417
Q6	133	4.31	.210	.730	.210	-1.857	.210	8.358	.417
Q7	133	4.45	.210	.657	.210	-1.609	.210	5.450	.417
Q8	133	4.06	.210	.694	.210	-1.601	.210	8.275	.417
Q9	133	4.12	.210	.808	.210	-1.801	.210	6.250	.417
Q10	133	4.14	.210	.641	.210	-.486	.210	.859	.417
Q11	133	4.22	.210	.582	.210	-.063	.210	-.346	.417

Kurtosis is a measure of the heaviness of the tails of a distribution. A normal distribution has kurtosis 0. Extremely non-normal distributions may have high positive or negative kurtosis values, while nearly normal distributions will have kurtosis values close to 0. Kurtosis is positive if the tails are "heavier" than for a normal distribution and negative if the tails are "lighter" than for a normal distribution. Kurtosis is an indicator used in distribution analysis as a sign of flattening or "peakedness" of a distribution. 4 out of 11 questions have a Kurtosis < 3 which is indicative of a Platykurtic distribution, flatter than a normal distribution with a wider peak. The probability for extreme values is less than for a normal distribution, and the values have a wider spread around the mean.

Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha is a coefficient of reliability. It is commonly used as a measure of the internal consistency or reliability of a test score for a sample of respondents. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient normally ranges between 0 and 1. The closer coefficient is to 1.0, the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. The research instrument was tested using Chronbach Alpha to measure the internal reliability of different questions. The alpha coefficient for the research instrument is 0.811 (Table 5) which indicates a very high internal consistency of the scale items. Question 6 could not be grouped during the reliability testing.

TABLE 5: CRONBACH ALPHA TEST OUTPUT FOR THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

CASE PROCESSING SUMMARY			
Cases			
	N		%
	Valid	133	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	0.0
		Total	133 100.0
RELIABILITY STATISTICS			
		Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
		.811	11

a. List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 6 shows the Chronbach Alpha test output for Questions - Q3, Q4, Q5, Q10 and Q11. The internal consistency is high as the value of Chronbach Alpha coefficient is 0.681. It shows that these five questions can be grouped together and represent the training effectiveness.

TABLE 6: CRONBACH ALPHA RELIABILITY TEST - GROUP 1 – Q3, Q4, Q5, Q10 AND Q11 – TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS

RELIABILITY STATISTICS				
Cronbach's Alpha		N of Items		
.681		5		

ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q3	15.62	5.827	.337	.685
Q4	15.04	5.461	.370	.677
Q5	14.38	5.797	.439	.629
Q10	14.20	6.083	.667	.565
Q11	14.12	6.561	.572	.606

Table 7 shows the Chronbach Alpha test result for Questions- Q1, Q2, Q7, Q8 and Q9. The internal consistency of these questions is very high as the value of Chronbach Alpha coefficient is 0.740. These questions also can be grouped together and they represent the learning and competency development of the participants.

TABLE 7: CRONBACH ALPHA RELIABILITY TEST – GROUP 2 – Q1, Q2, Q7, Q8 AND Q9 – LEARNING AND COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT

RELIABILITY STATISTICS				
Cronbach's Alpha		N of Items		
.740		5		
ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q1	16.94	4.178	.514	.693
Q2	16.95	4.111	.456	.711
Q7	16.80	3.946	.538	.681
Q8	17.20	4.083	.435	.719
Q9	17.14	3.391	.585	.661

Spearman's Correlation Analysis

Spearman's Correlation test assesses how well the relationship between two variables can be described using a monotonic function. If there are no repeated data values, a perfect Spearman correlation of +1 or -1 occurs when each of the variables is a perfect monotone function of the other (Wikipedia, 2012). Table 8 shows the Spearman's Correlation coefficient value between different questions. It validates that the group 1 (Q3, Q4, Q5, Q10 and Q11) and group 2 (Q1, Q2, Q7, Q8 and Q9) have positive internal correlation.

TABLE 8: SPEARMAN'S CORRELATION TEST OUTPUT

Correlations	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11
Q1 Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.507**	.195*	.359**	.342**	.422**	.434**	.392**	.338**	.517**	.530**
Q1 Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.024	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Q1 N	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133
Q2 Correlation Coefficient	.507**	1.000	.243**	.221*	.346**	.355**	.307**	.253**	.384**	.397**	.603**
Q2 Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.005	.011	.000	.000	.000	.003	.000	.000	.000
Q2 N	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133
Q3 Correlation Coefficient	.195*	.243**	1.000	.183*	.198*	.170	.147	-.011	.100	.355**	.280**
Q3 Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	.005		.035	.022	.051	.092	.899	.252	.000	.001
Q3 N	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133
Q4 Correlation Coefficient	.359**	.221*	.183*	1.000	.244**	.229**	.361**	.196*	.315**	.399**	.317**
Q4 Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.011	.035		.005	.008	.000	.024	.000	.000	.000
Q4 N	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133
Q5 Correlation Coefficient	.342**	.346**	.198*	.244**	1.000	.308**	.435**	.087	.212*	.445**	.424**
Q5 Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.022	.005		.000	.000	.319	.014	.000	.000
Q5 N	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133
Q6 Correlation Coefficient	.422**	.355**	.170	.229**	.308**	1.000	.387**	.253**	.357**	.392**	.397**
Q6 Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.051	.008	.000		.000	.003	.000	.000	.000
Q6 N	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133
Q7 Correlation Coefficient	.434**	.307**	.147	.361**	.435**	.387**	1.000	.324**	.420**	.488**	.517**
Q7 Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.092	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
Q7 N	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133
Q8 Correlation Coefficient	.392**	.253**	-.011	.196*	.087	.253**	.324**	1.000	.511**	.132	.181*
Q8 Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.003	.899	.024	.319	.003	.000		.000	.131	.038
Q8 N	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133
Q9 Correlation Coefficient	.338**	.384**	.100	.315**	.212*	.357**	.420**	.511**	1.000	.407**	.350**
Q9 Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.252	.000	.014	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
Q9 N	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133
Q10 Correlation Coefficient	.517**	.397**	.355**	.399**	.445**	.392**	.488**	.132	.407**	1.000	.660**
Q10 Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.131	.000		.000
Q10 N	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133
Q11 Correlation Coefficient	.530**	.603**	.280**	.317**	.424**	.397**	.517**	.181*	.350**	.660**	1.000
Q11 Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.038	.000	.000	
Q11 N	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133	133

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 9 shows the correlation between the two group variables – Training Effectiveness and Learning and competency development. It is clear from the table that the variables are also positively correlated with each other as the value of spearman's coefficient is 0.0362.

TABLE 9: SPEARMAN'S CORRELATION SCORE AMONG THE GROUPS

Spearman's Correlation		Training Effectiveness	Learning and Competency Development
Training Effectiveness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.362**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	133	133
Learning and Competency Development	Correlation Coefficient	.362**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	133	133

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

HYPOTHESIS TESTING AND RESULTS

Kolmogorov Smirnov test was used for hypotheses testing and the SPSS output of the data is given in table 10.

TABLE 10: KOLMOGOROV-SMIRNOV TEST RESULTS

Hypothesis Test Summary				
Sr. No.	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Training Effectiveness is normal with mean 3.69 and standard deviation 0.63.	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	0.00	Reject the null hypothesis
2	The distribution of Learning and Competency Development is normal with mean 4.25 and standard deviation 0.54.	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	0.00	Reject the null hypothesis

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

H1: VLM imparts a holistic learning experience to the sales workforce to discharge their on-the-job responsibilities

Table 10 shows the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results of the hypotheses. The mean of the training effectiveness score is 3.69 with standard deviation of 0.63. 95% participants feel that trainer was effective in translating the training into a learning experience. 93% participants also feel that the content delivered through the virtual mode was highly effective and relevant for them to discharge their on-the-job tasks. It can be concluded on the basis of responses and hypotheses test results that training was highly effective and the hypothesis can be retained.

H2: VLM promotes learning and results in the competency development of sales workforce

It is shown in the table 10 p-value for the learning and competency development variable is less than significant level of 0.05. The mean of variable score is 4.25 with standard deviation of 0.54. 90% of the participants feel that they along with their team members are highly motivated to attend such training sessions for further enhancement of skills and knowledge. Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests results show that the hypothesis can be retained and it can be concluded that VLM promotes learning and results in competency development of sales workforce.

KEY Findings

The key findings of the research are listed below:

- **VLM framework is an effective tool and driving the desired objectives for sales workforce**
 - 81% of the sales managers feel virtual learning model is convenient
 - 95% of the sales managers feel that VLM framework is effectively used by the trainers for to translate training objectives into learning experience
 - 93% of the sales managers feel that content delivered through VLM was relevant and useful for their on-the-job responsibilities
- **The sales workforce is motivated to actively participate in training programs through VLM**
 - 96% of the sales managers want to attend more such programs for further enhancement of their skills and knowledge
 - 88% of the sales managers want to organize such programs for their team members
 - 90% of the sales managers feel that their team members want to attend more such programs
- **Overall quality and training satisfaction level is high**
 - 93% of the sales managers feel that certification and feedback process is user friendly
 - 89% of the sales managers rate the overall experience and satisfaction level as high
 - 92% of the sales managers find the quality of training inputs received as good and satisfactory

CONCLUSION

The research findings empirically validate effectiveness of the VLM framework for training and development of sales workforce. The study has also contributes to the understanding that quality of the training delivered through VLM is quite high and training programs are driving the end objectives. The sales workforce is motivated to participate in training initiatives through VLM as it provides the flexibility for pursuing one's learning needs.

The organizations can also utilize the VLM framework as a cornerstone to leverage the intellectual capital and improve the sales performance. The VOCES model shown in the figure 4 provides the roadmap to the sales managers to enhance their productivity and achieve superior business results

FIGURE 4: VOCES MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE SALES DELIVERY THROUGH VIRTUAL LEARNING FRAMEWORK



Sales managers can utilize the post training assessment scores to identify the gaps and chalk out the necessary performance improvement plan. The research findings are also helpful to the practicing training managers to deploy dynamic and high impact training programs for competency development and skill enhancement to a geographically spread sales workforce.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank Mr. Sudhir Warier, Research Scholar, Aligarh Muslim University, U.P. for his support during the data analysis and reporting phase.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Name	Role / Channel
Location	Designation

Sr. No.	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Trainer was effective in translating the training objectives into learning experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	Training content was relevant and useful for discharging your roles and responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	Virtual Learning methodology is not driving the desired objectives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	The Training duration was convenient and not adversely impacting your work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	The Virtual Learning methodology was more convenient and preferable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	Feedback and Certification process was user friendly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	You are motivated to attend VC training programs for further enhancement of your skills and knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8	You want to organize VC training programs for your channel members in your respective location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9	Your team members are motivated to attend the training programs organized by you in your respective location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		Very Good	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
10	Please rate the overall satisfaction and experience of the training programs attended	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11	Please rate the quality of training inputs received	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX 2 – CHANNEL WISE RESPONSES

Channel	Responses
Corporate / Enterprise	15
Direct Sales	45
Mass Distribution	59
Retail	14
Total	133

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Co-ordinator

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