



The USSA Calibration







Creating the USSA

The Universal Sales Skills Audit is a unique, externally benchmarked, on-line sales skills assessments. The assessment modules are based on a standardized competency framework for sales comprising some nine primary skill areas; which are then broken down into a total of some 56 skill 'modules'.

This framework was developed by the UK Government (the Marketing and Sales Standards Setting Body – MSSSB) between 2003 and 2007 and is designed to drive up sales effectiveness by aligning sales skills to academic based learning modules. Andrew Dugdale (President of SalesAssessment.com, the authors of the USSA) was part of the expert group involved in the design of these skills modules for the UK Government.

This framework is already being introduced into other markets outside the UK as sales training providers are given academic accreditation for their programs, and likewise, the USSA is already available in 3 languages - English (both US and International); Dutch; and Brazilian Portuguese.

A further 5 languages will follow during 2015 including French; German; Spanish (Castilian and LatAm); Russian; and Chinese (Traditional and Simplified).

How do the existing USSA modules map to the standards?

To provide an example of how the USSA is designed to fit against these established standards, we can briefly examine skill area seven (the selling cycle); module 1 (generate and follow up sales leads) which is the basis for the first released suite of five modules called the Core Sales Skills.

7.1 This [MSSSB] unit is about making initial contact with the customer through a variety of methods and establishing their needs; advising potential customers of any products that may be appropriate for them; and seeking areas of opportunity for up selling and cross selling.

This module maps to the currently released five units of the USSA in the following manner:

7.1 Competencies	Equivalent USSA skill module	
1. Contact customers who have been identified as prospects and establish initial communication	2.0 Spotting opportunities (These are the skills required to effectively identify good opportunities and position the value to the customer) 2.1 Communicating (This is the ability to convey information and ideas so that customers and others understand the message)	
2. Access the person who makes the buying decisions	1.1 Self-management and professionalism (This means having a business orientation which guides a person's behaviour so they demonstrate maturity, integrity, and business and customer awareness) 1.3 Resilience and follow-through (This means coping with pressure, being adaptable in dealing with customer enquiries and problems and managing stress.) 2.2 Using probing questions (This is the ability to maintain a clear picture of what information you have and what information you are missing, such that you can formulate and ask appropriate probing questions that plug the knowledge gap)	 

7.1 Competencies	Equivalent USSA skill module	
3. Identify and confirm your prospect's interest in particular products or services	3.1 Understanding the customer's needs (This is the ability to identify the key aspects of the customer's or prospect's needs and match your products or services to those needs) 3.4 Testing and challenging assumptions (This is the ability to test and challenge assumptions in your dealings with customers and others, involving identifying assumptions in anything, testing their implications and challenging their validity)	
4. Make further contact with your customer to interest them in your organisation's products or services	3.2 Matching customer needs to products or services (This is the ability to understand the customer's or prospect's needs or objectives and match them to the company's offerings) 3.3 Keeping abreast of new products and services (This involves assimilating and understanding new trends, products etc. in order to evaluate and interpret them for use with customers)	
5. Maintain clear records of contact with customers and any further action which may be required	4.0 Paperwork management (This is the ability to complete paperwork accurately and in a timely manner and according to company policies and guidelines) 4.2 Planning and managing activities (This is the ability to build appropriate plans to support the day to day activities associated with a person's work)	
6. Identify the reasons why customers are interested in particular products or services and clarify opportunities for selling, up-selling and cross-sellings	2.3 Advising the customer (This is the ability to guide the customer through the use of consulting techniques, covering a range of approaches from offering information through to making recommendations)	
7. Explain the features and benefits of products or services to customers	5.0 Influencing customer expectations (This is the ability to find out and influence customer expectations and use this knowledge to enthuse the customer about the benefits of a potential offering)	
8. Respond effectively to your customer's queries and objections or offer alternative products or services	5.2 Objection Handling (This is the ability to effectively deal with objections raised by customers or prospects)	

7.1 Competencies	Equivalent USSA skill module	
9. Provide details about the possible terms of sale	5.1 Negotiating (This means working with the customer towards agreeing a position and ultimately a sale, which has optimal, mutual benefits for all parties)	
10. Convert cold prospects to warm prospects by securing agreement to further contact with a specific sales agenda	1.2 Problem solving (This is the ability to define and analyse problems and priorities and the ability to evaluate the issues raised and identify or create possible solutions) 3.0 Awareness of competitors (This is the ability to understand your competitors; their impact and implications for you in relation to their strengths, their marketing activity, the way they position their offerings to your customers and prospects and how they are likely to be perceived by customers or prospects)	 
11. Inform colleagues about possible opportunities for cross-selling and up-selling	4.1 Achieving goals, objectives and targets (This is the ability to recognize specific goals, objectives and targets and take all steps necessary to achieve them)	
12. Pass information about customers and their buying needs promptly and accurately to appropriate people within your organisation	Not specifically covered within Core Selling Skills. However 4.0 Paperwork Management (see 5.) and 2.1 Communicating (see 1.) cover the underlying skills involved with this element.	 

As can be clearly seen, it requires all the elements of the currently released five USSA modules to cover this one skill module out of the fifty six skill modules comprising the full MSSSB National Occupational Standards (NOS) handbook. We have taken the skills required here as the absolute minimum set of skills required before a person should be regarded as a 'sales person', hence why they are called Core Sales Skills.





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