

Human Skills 

# Customer success story

Merck Surface  
Solutions





# Global Training Solution

## powered by Merck Surface Solutions and Human Skills

### **About Merck Surface Solutions**

At Surface Solutions, we excite our customers with decorative and functional solutions. Our products enable our customers to create innovative surfaces of all kinds. Our materials enable more beautiful, more resistant, and more effective products. Our pearlescent pigments allow striking automotive coatings, fascinating cosmetics, extraordinary pack-

aging, and innovative product design. With a broad portfolio of active ingredients, we enable cosmetics manufacturers to enrich their skin care products with moisturizing, protecting, or anti-aging effects. Moreover, with our functional solutions we serve a large number of innovative applications, from dirt-repellent and easy-care surfaces to laser markings of plastic parts and cables.



# About the project

In 2023, Merck Surface Solutions chose to partner with Human Skills for the design and implementation of a global Customer Centric Selling Journey.

# The project aimed to

**1.**

Foster a high impact, learning culture with focus on speed, customer obsession and passion to win.

**2.**

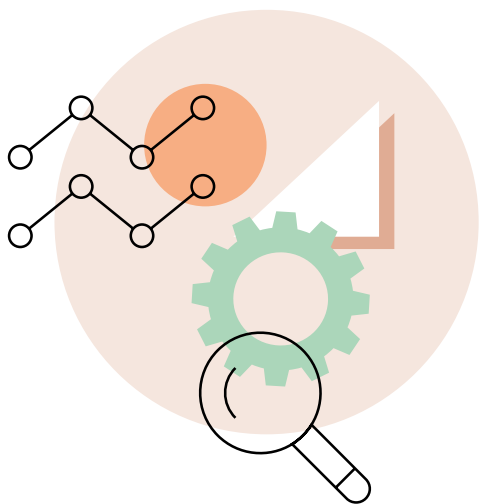
Become a best-in class customer centric organization and focus even more strongly on our customers

**3.**

Develop from a product-towards a solution oriented organization

# Challenges

After analyzing current challenges that prevented Surface Solutions from driving its strategic goals on a skills level, the following topics were identified as focus areas for the initiative:



---

**SALA** Implementation of our Surface Advanced Learning Academy (SALA) – a web-based learning management system.

---

**Customer Centricity** The implementation of a customer-centric approach that supports financial results and profitability.

---

**Empowerment** The Empowerment of decision making and commercial responsibility in all regions

---

**Transformation** Driving the transformation towards a flexible, agile organization.

---

Pre-analysis also emphasized the following key behavior changes that needed to happen:

---

**Mindset** A transformation of mindset as a key driver for Merck Surface Solution's Strategy.

---

**Leadership** Leadership to take a crucial role: Sales leaders focus more pro-actively on team motivation, field support and coaching.

---

**Ownership** Responsibility and ownership (of decisions) as key traits for all employees.

---

**Customer needs** Deeply understanding the customer as a key skill to drive financial results.

---

**Trusted Advisor** Becoming a pro-active trusted advisor as the main differentiator compared to competitors.

---

**Focus** Prioritization and management of own resources to create capacity for focusing on key customers.

---

# Solutions



Merck Surface Solutions and Human Skills developed a blended learning journey with a duration of 8–9 months including the following elements:

---

**Learning Journey** Three main training modules focusing on key behavior changes that needed to happen.

---

**Asynchronous Learning** SALA: Self-directed learning before, between and after training modules

---

**Business Results** A focus on practical application and business results

---

---

**Manager Touch points** Involvement of direct managers through pre-defined touch points (Manager Check-ins)

---

**Result presentations** Final presentation event focusing on individual results in skill-development and business successes.

---

## Pre-Training

**Preview Video**  
Learning Journey Intro

**Pre-Work**  
Preparation M1

## Training

**Module 1**  
Customer Centric Mindset

**F2F**  
3 days

**Transfer Tasks**  
**Pre-Work**  
Preparation M2

**Module 2**  
Customer Centric Sales Process

**Live Online**  
6 x 2.5 hours

**Transfer Tasks**  
**Pre-Work**  
Preparation M3

**Module 3**  
Customer Centric Presentations

**Live Online**  
2 days  
4 x 3.5 hours

**Transfer Tasks**

## Post-Training

**Report-out**  
Reflection and presentations

**Pre-Work**  
Preparation Report-out

**Post-Work**  
Skills Booster, online

**Manager Check-in:** 3 touch points, 1 hour each

4 weeks  
prior to M1

Month 1

Month 3-4

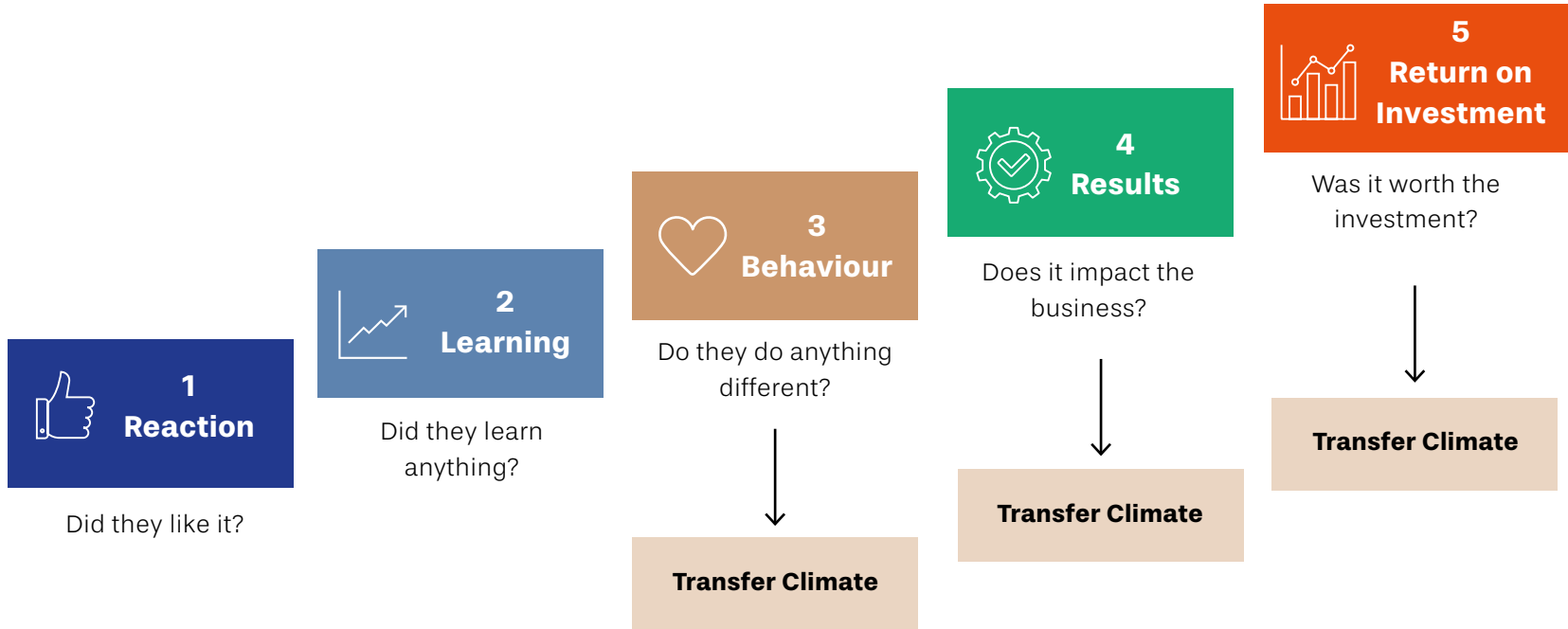
Month 6-7

Month 8-9

The solution was implemented on a global level with a total of 12 groups and 136 participants, located in Darmstadt, Shanghai, Bangkok, Mumbai, Seoul, Sao Paulo, San Diego, and Philadelphia

# Evaluation of results

Based on the renowned evaluation system of Donald Kirkpatrick and Dr. Paul Leone project results were measured on Levels 1–5:

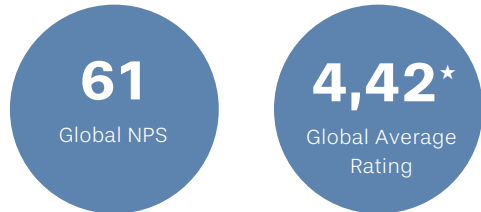




## Results Levels 1–2

Level 1 evaluations provide an overall impression of the participant experience and serve as an opportunity to collect initial feedback on what’s working or not working in terms of design, duration, and facilitator effectiveness. Level 2 measures the amount of learning that occurred because of the training.

The evaluation was conducted in a combined approach on SALA with the following results:



\*of 5

## Results Level 3

Level 3 describes the amount of observable behaviour changes demonstrated by employees because of training. The evaluation was conducted through a level of improvement survey distributed to all participants in the post-training phase. The following key behaviours were rated as most important improvement areas:

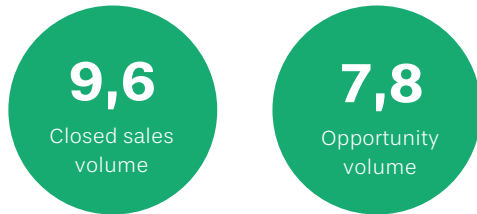
1. **Listening Skills**
2. **Improving customer relationships**
3. **Questioning Skills**
4. **Presentation Skills**
5. **Managing Objections**



## Results Levels 4

A level 4 evaluation evaluates business results that participants reached throughout the learning journey.

Evaluation was conducted in a Report-Out-Session in the post-training phase with the following, documented results (Mio €):



## Results Levels 5

Level 5 calculates the Return of Investment of a project based on the following formula:

$$\text{ROI\%} = ((\text{Benefit}-\text{Cost}) / \text{Cost}) \times 100$$

To recognise external factors that influenced results, two additional measures were taken during the calculation:

- Closed Sales Volume (Benefit) was only calculated with a training attribution of 30%. That means e.g. that a closed sale of 100.000 € was only considered with 30.000 €.
- Cost was multiplied by 1,5 to honour additional internal costs like project management, travel, and accommodation etc.

Based on this calculation the Customer Centric Selling project of Merck Surface Sales Solutions reached the following ROI:





# Testimonials

Participants from different regions  
share their experiences

# Yoshifumie Horie

Associate Manager

APAC

**“Through the training,  
I have rediscovered many  
essential business  
practices and techniques ...”**

I would like to share my achievement by participating in the Customer Centric Selling Training. Through the training, I have rediscovered many essential business practices and techniques, regained customer focus and improved communication skills, both in person and digital. By enhancing and acquiring new skills, I was able

to significantly improve the preparation and execution of customer meetings. The training helped to build and strengthen my relationship with indirect customers which are important to generate new business opportunities. Thanks to my improved communication and presentation skills, I can now address the requirements and needs of

these customers more effectively and gain more interest. For example, I can clearly see that my acquired communication techniques are helping me to get appointments with customers more successfully and quickly. Lastly, the training gave me more self-assurance and self-confidence in my customer interactions.

# Lisa Geiger

## Key Account Manager North America

**“This has been the best training that I have had during my 36 years at Merck.”**

I want to thank you for the great customer centric training. For me, it was life changing. This has been the best training that I have had during my 36 years at Merck. The impact—priceless! I cannot believe what I learned and can apply to work and personal life daily. I have learned that I can pause, speak slowly and get my message across in a clearer and more concise manner to my customer. I have learned that it is best to

bring up work challenges through my own experiences and come up with not only one idea but two or three and state the pros and cons of each. This is for internal and external situations. I have learned to ask different types of questions to my customers, that truly show that I care. I really like repeating customer's questions to verify I am understanding them correctly. When planning customer visits, I have expanded the scope, preparing for the no and planning for the

yes. I am also developing my already genuine voice, to listen and make sure I capture the customer's concerns, taking my listening to a higher level. I really see the impact of eye contact, hand gestures and inflections in portraying confidence and assurance to our customers. It makes the presentation/story much more interesting and engaging. And it was great getting the feedback from my peers!

# Karen Carlson

Key Account Manager

North America

Thank you for the Customer Centric training that you provided over the past few months. When we were first advised of the extensive training sessions that we would be participating in, most of us thought "OK, another one ... ." and were not too excited. I have been with EMD for over 30 years, and an Account Manager 25+ years. Over these years, I have participated in many sales training programs. I got very little out of most of them. I must say that this Customer Centric

training was by far the most relevant, engaging, and practical of any that I have taken. I really feel that I have developed myself in new ways, both personally and professionally. I learned some new skills, particularly with virtual presentations that will be really useful in interactions with my customers. I feel that one of my strengths is the ability to develop trusting, more intimate relationships with my customers. I was glad to see the importance and focus on this in the trainings.

**"I really feel that I have developed myself in new ways, both personally and professionally."**

While some of the exercises forced us to step out of our comfort zones, you created a safe, encouraging space where we felt that we could be honest and truly encourage each other. I even got to know some of my colleagues, some that I have worked with for a number of years, on a much deeper level which only makes working together that much more enjoyable.

# Emanuele Piras

## Account Manager

### EMEA

With the help of the Customer Centric Selling Training, I have explored new skills and have pushed my limits of what is possible. I have gained new skills in managing difficult situations with customers and in building better relationships by showing more empathy and sharing the pain. In addition, I make the best use of meeting preparation

like better anticipating potential scenarios and outcomes. Finally, I have improved my presentation skills to create even more impact at customers. All the above-mentioned new insights helped me to defend a 40 tons business and 745k € in sales at one of our major accounts.

**“Finally, I have improved my presentation skills to create even more impact at customers.”**

## Core trainer team



## About Human Skills

Human Skills is an international training company with a rich project history and a team with 30+ years of design and delivery experience in the training and development industry.

Leading global organizations choose Human Skills as their strategic partner for holistic programs in the areas of leadership and sales, personal growth, communication, presentation, and transformation management. Measuring training impact is an integral part of all learning journeys that Human Skills designs and implements.



**Human Skills**

HSD hub GmbH  
Unter den Linden 26–30  
10117 Berlin  
Germany

info@humanskills.com  
**humanskills.com**

# Project Team



**Sabrina Damato**  
Sales Effectiveness  
Manager Surface Solutions  
Commercial Excellence



**Rahel Pfaffenzeller**  
Project Manager  
Human Skills



**Bastian Unger**  
Global Director  
Commercial Excellence  
Surface Solutions



**Susanne Martin**  
L&D Expert  
Human Skills

## Contact

Please do not hesitate to reach out to [susanne.martin@humanskills.com](mailto:susanne.martin@humanskills.com) for a personal conversation to discover more about the project or evaluate the suitability of a similar measure for your department or business unit.

**Human Skills**



**Human Skills**

HSD hub GmbH  
Unter den Linden 26–30  
10117 Berlin  
Germany

info@humanskills.com

**humanskills.com**

**Susanne Martin**

+49 160 94 58 98 67  
susanne.martin@humanskills.com

**Maja Janssen**

+49 170 91 01 501  
maja.janssen@humanskills.com



**Let's get in touch!**  
... and discover how we can  
collaborate for real change.