



ShaughnessyHowell...

A Blueprint for Success

by Rosemary K. Ryan

At ShaughnessyHowell, creating business partnerships is likened to custom building a house. We start with a good, solid foundation of trust and then skilled artisans join in, each contributing their expertise to the project. At the end of the day, you have a blueprint destined for success, designed to specification, created by many qualified and capable hands. And if those hands belong to folks within your organization, then you'd be wise to enlist the best architects around: Cathy Shaughnessy and Marion Thomson Howell.

"I was the liaison between the Bay Corporate and the Bay Cosmetics buying function. What a challenge! ...giving direction to ShaughnessyHowell and keeping the clients happy. (The training program) grew into a multi-dimensional project, and ShaughnessyHowell was tremendously flexible in meeting client needs – layering in new parts of the project as it evolved. Their standard of delivery and design was excellent; feedback was unanimous: an exceptional job!"

**Betty Ball, Senior Manager,
Organizational Development, Hudson's Bay University**

"Our partnerships are based on trust – it's central to everything we do," states Marion unequivocally. Cathy couldn't agree more and says that it all starts with a blank page: "We find out exactly what your business goals are, then determine the most effective way to help you achieve those goals." And if that means bringing on board an expert in a specialized field, so be it. "We're not afraid to say 'we may need some help'," says Cathy candidly, adding that at ShaughnessyHowell, the penultimate goal is, "Making a positive difference in people's work lives."

Making a difference, determining effective business solutions and forming solid business partnerships

makes for interesting work, according to Marion. "It's a discovery process - and that's what makes it fun," she says. Toss away the notion of clients and think allies. Drop team leader and think team player. Lose consultant and think partner. Then you're well on your way to understanding ShaughnessyHowell's award-winning philosophy.

Recognized by The Ontario Society for Training & Development, ShaughnessyHowell Inc. walked away with two OTTERs (Ontario's Top Training Excellence Recognition) for the second year running. These awards recognize companies which have developed, produced and delivered original and innovative products in the training and development field. Cathy won high praise from the judges for *Building Your Business At the Bay*; a bilingual training program designed for new and experienced cosmetic advisors and fragrance consultants. Marion won top marks for *Retailing at Canada Post*, also a bilingual training program for retail managers required to be merchandising, inventory management, strategic planning and sales experts in some 4,400 Canada Post outlets Canada-wide.

At the Bay, Cathy had the enormously challenging task of helping cosmetic and fragrance consultants become salespeople. "They already knew their target audience and their product lines very well," she says, "but the program we created taught cosmetic and fragrance consultants how to develop their selling skills, to understand customer wants and needs, to develop ongoing rapport with customers."

To that end, ShaughnessyHowell opted for a multi-pronged approach to training, which included

classroom sessions, a self-directed video, and the creation of a CD-ROM. The greatest challenge? Consistency. Because there were lots of components to the program consistency was paramount. “We had to appeal to different learning styles, yet everyone had to walk away with the same competencies.” Cathy surmounted this challenge by staying true to the end goal. “We continually asked ourselves, ‘What do we want to achieve (through training)?’.” A simple question that ensured the project’s ultimate business goal was achieved. “It was a fascinating and challenging project,” says Cathy. “(Fragrance and cosmetics) is such a unique industry – it’s vibrant and fast-paced and filled with passionate people. It’s a powerful industry and it was interesting to learn how it works.”

“(Our partnership with ShaughnessyHowell) was based on trust ...They’re terrific researchers and information gatherers. They have the confidence and expertise to push back. If they don’t think something will work, they say so and suggest alternatives. Marion and Cathy have an uncanny ability to focus on the end result. The rollout (of our training) was exactly what we wanted and it was done on time. They really keep their eye on the ball.”

*Susy Brown, National Communications Manager,
Cosmetics & Fragrance, the Bay.*

Marion is just as enthusiastic when it comes to her award-winning project for Canada Post. “I really enjoy working on a team,” she says. “The discovery process – figuring out the best method of getting people to learn is exciting.” Marion’s job was to design a program to teach managers how to manage their territories – everything from inventory levels and financial planning to maintaining quality standards and growing the business. The most exciting part of the project, she says, was developing a case study that was presented to participants at the end of training. “We created a mock territory with real data – financial information, staffing issues, customer concerns, etc. Then, based on their training, managers built a business case and presented it to their general managers and directors.”

“We’ve worked with ShaughnessyHowell for about five years. Our relationship works because we’ve allowed them to get inside our business. Through thorough research, they understand our audience and our organization’s climate – our interests are their interests. With strong training methodology and the right knowledge experts ...it’s a winning partnership.”

*Marnie Armstrong, Manager,
Retail Performance Excellence, Canada Post.*

Retailing at Canada Post is designed in a modular format, so that if full, five-day training isn’t required, only appropriate modules are used. Convincing some key leaders in the organization that managers would indeed find value in the program, says Marion, was challenging. Understandably, there was apprehension about how long people would spend off the job while training, and if they’d truly walk away as more competent managers. “They were blown away,” says Marion happily. “We listened to their concerns and addressed them through value propositions. And still today, when the program is supposed to be over, we’re getting calls saying it should be made available to even more people!”

Another really dynamic element of Marion’s project was forming a partnership with Mark’s Work Warehouse. “Mark’s gave us access to their stores, retail and district managers – it was an enormous goodwill gesture. Participants in our program met with Mark’s management staff to exchange ideas and learnings - a great way to gain insight into how another organization operates and functions. It was win-win on both sides.”

It seems everyone involved with ShaughnessyHowell Inc. comes out on top, from Cathy and Marion with their award-winning training programs, to the Bay and Canada Post personnel receiving invaluable training. “If you want tailor-made training solutions, that’s what we offer,” concludes Cathy. “We build solutions as we learn about you, your organization’s nuances and your corporate strategy.” Not only do tailor-made solutions result in a higher likelihood that you’ll meet your training objectives, but you’re also apt to have a greater buy-in by your target audience, which makes for winners all around.



**Recognized by
The Ontario Society
for Training &
Development,
ShaughnessyHowell
Inc. walked away with
two OTTERs for the
second year running.**