

A White Paper on

The Supportive Selling Training System



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Introduction and Executive Summary

The Problem: Research in various fields has established the obvious: skills cannot be developed through lectures, even when the lectures are supplemented with video. To develop skills, whether becoming a marksman, playing a musical instrument, or communicating with others, practice and feedback are essential. Interpersonal skills, such as selling or other forms of influencing, are particularly challenging skills to develop because of two barriers. First, it is difficult to provide sufficient practice and effective feedback, and second, the learner must not only develop a new skill, but change a lifetime of communication habits.

The Solution: Dr. Dale Olsen first recognized these barriers in 1997, when the FBI asked him to develop technology to help train new FBI agents in investigative interview techniques. The resulting training system used a new simulation technology called **PeopleSim™** and set a new standard in training communication skills. The FBI training system was distributed throughout the federal government's law enforcement agencies, to state and local law enforcement agencies throughout the United States, and to English-speaking countries around the world. Its success also led to the development of dozens of other PeopleSim™ training systems for every branch of the military including the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the FBI, DEA, Intelligence Community, and National

Institutes of Health. The technology has advanced each year since its inception and remains the most advanced interpersonal skills training technology in the world.

Validation: Independent scientific research studies by universities including Yale University, the University of Wisconsin and Northwestern University have shown that the PeopleSim™ technology has overcome the well-established barrier of training communication skills.

Commercial Application: Now, the technology is being introduced to non-government users. **Supportive Selling** is the latest training system in a new series of PeopleSim™ products designed to provide opportunities to practice critical interpersonal skills and to receive highly targeted feedback. The Supportive Selling sales model was developed based on research on successful sales and, the much greater volume of research, on influencing others. The combination of the most advanced communication training technology and the advanced sales model has produced an unrivaled sales training system that is available via ILT, VILT and as online performance support.



Dan Williams

The Sales Training Model

Research conducted by Neil Rackham and his associates in the 80s, and published in his book entitled SPIN selling, transformed the modern sales approach. During that same time, Drs. William Miller and Stephen Rollnick developed an influencing methodology called Motivational Interviewing (MI) (see Motivational Interviewing: Third Edition: Helping People Change, 2013). Because MI proved effective and had so many health care applications, the subject became the focus of thousands of research papers. While this research dwarfed previous research that had been done on selling and advanced influencing methods, it proved that MI techniques and the SPIN selling techniques have many similarities and share a common ground with research in other fields where influencing is important.

Dr. Olsen and his team have utilized the broad spectrum of influencing techniques to design and develop training for MI, suicide intervention, and confession solicitation. As a result, they were in a unique position to apply this research to designing and developing a next-generation sales model. Their **Supportive Selling**

Model puts particular emphasis on the proven needs-based selling concepts and reaches even greater depths by drawing on the millions of hours of research conducted on influencing. It has been vetted through conversations and reviews with top sales training consultants including David Zehren, and David Milliken, and has been tested by highly successful sales people in a broad range of industries.

Supportive Selling is organized into four general **Guidelines** to help develop collaborative relationships, four specific **Steps** to help structure sales calls, and a variety of **Tools for Selling** to help learners decide what to say, moment-to-moment, within the call. The four Guidelines define the ideal philosophy of developing and maintaining a collaborative relationship with buyers.

The Guidelines are to:

1. Accept Buyers as They Are
2. Develop Value
3. Roll with Buyers' Resistance
4. Support Buyers' Autonomy

The four Steps are a sequence of actions to help guide the discussion to the end goal of getting a commitment. The Steps are:

1. Setting the Tone and the Purpose of the Meeting
2. Getting a Focused Statement of Needs from the Buyer
3. Presenting a Solution
4. Developing a Follow-Up Plan

Finally, the Tools for selling provide specific tips and techniques for supporting the buyers' movement from ambivalence to taking ownership of your solution. These conversational techniques are adapted from many sources, including Motivational Interviewing, to fit the structure of the sales call. The Tools include actionable tactics (e.g., reflections, evocative questions, and summary statements) that sellers can use during the conversation to help convert their potential buyers into their champions.

SIMmersion's PeopleSim™ Technology

PeopleSim™ technology simulates people's behavior in the most realistic way possible. To create the required realism, a sophisticated algorithm identifies realistic responses from thousands of video vignettes used to portray the simulated customer. For the Supportive Selling Sales Training, new technology was developed to enable the simulated customer: Dan Williams to react to the user based on (1) what is said on a particular topic and (2) his longer-term feelings about the learner as the conversation progresses.

Feedback is provided in a variety of ways including help from an on-screen coach and a comprehensive after-action review. PeopleSim™ technology also uses gaming elements to encourage repeated practice and is accessible via the internet, mobile Apps, and DVD.



The Simulation Scenario

A PeopleSim™ simulation was developed to help learners develop the skills needed to effectively apply the Supportive Selling Model. In this simulation, Dan Williams, the Director of Training for a network of senior living communities scattered throughout the United States, is in the role of the prospect. The learner is a sales representative for John Bear Training, Inc. Bear provides a full spectrum of training systems, including over 150 management-related courses, most of which can be delivered in a classroom setting or online. The simulation challenges the learner to identify needs and to demonstrate how Bear is uniquely qualified to meet those needs.

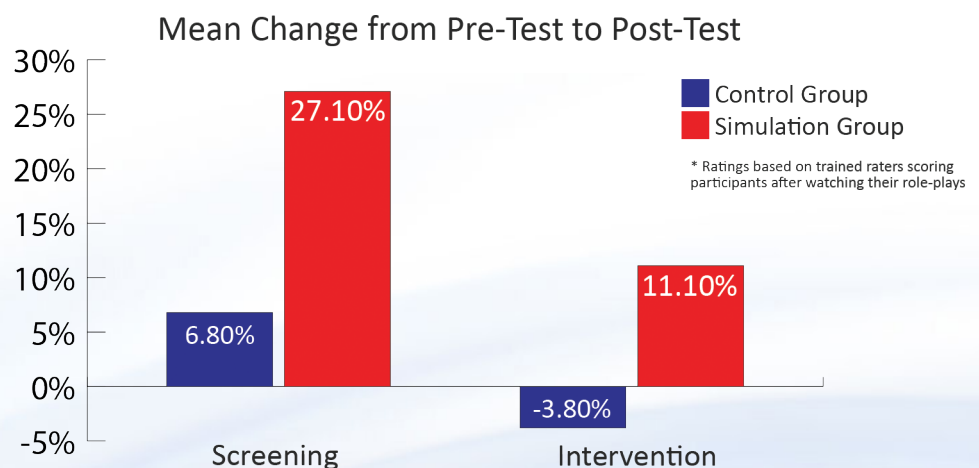
Validation

The PeopleSim™ technology has been evaluated in numerous research studies including traditional and major studies conducted by universities. The traditional studies have all shown that learners found the PeopleSim™ training system easy to use and perceived it to be effective. A study at Winona State University surveyed police officers one year after training using a PeopleSim™ interview and interrogation training system. Officers reported that they were able to better detect deception and got more confessions than they did before the training.

Importantly, two major university studies of the PeopleSim™ technology used scientifically valid single-blind research techniques. The first study was performed at the University of Wisconsin, Madison by the School of Medicine. The study involved training healthcare providers (physicians, RNs, PAs, and medical students) to screen patients for alcohol abuse and present brief interventions to those who were abusing. The abilities of all 102 providers were first evaluated before 51 randomly selected ones were provided with access to the training system (Simulation Group). Six months later all 102 were again evaluated and those who were given access to the training system (see graph) did remarkably

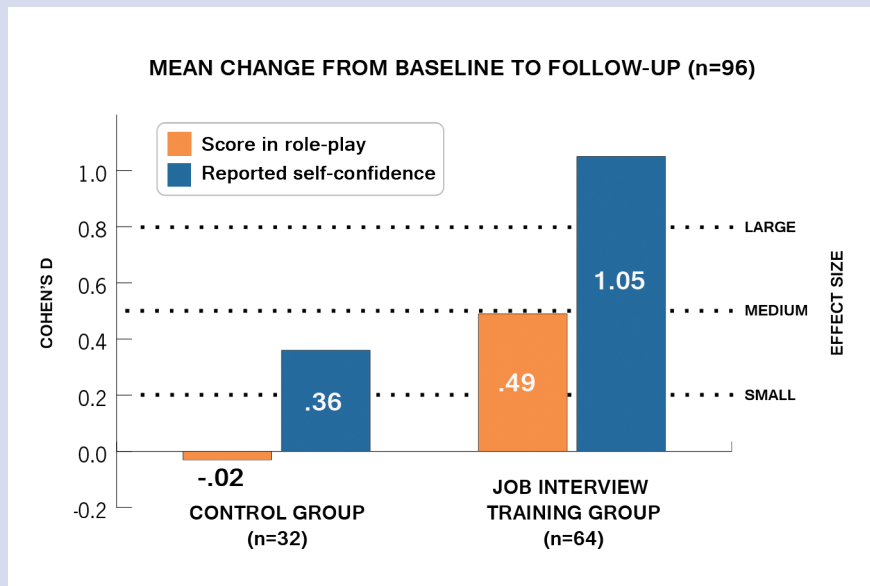
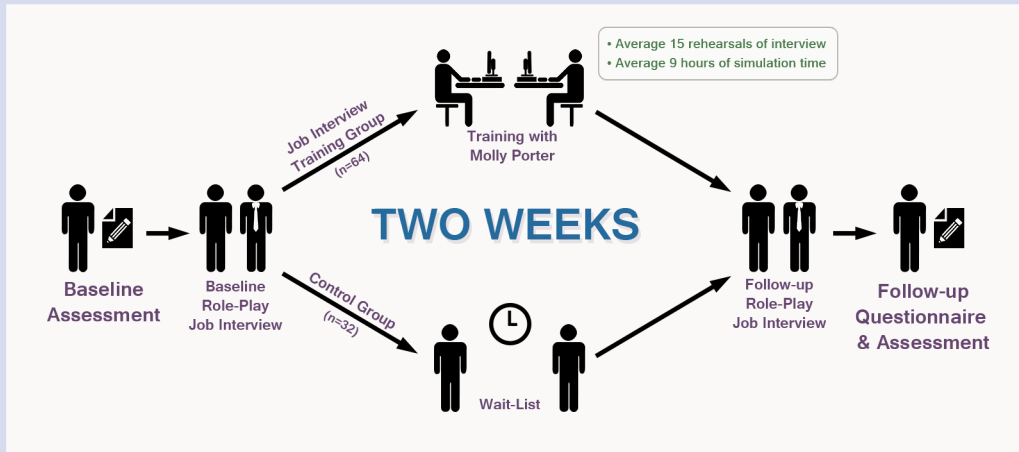
better than those without access (Control Group). An unexpected result was that most of the providers chose to repeat the 40-minute training conversation 10 or more times.

The second major study was conducted at Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine and involved a very different population: adults with disabilities including veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, people with autism, and people with long-term mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia. The training was designed to help long-term unemployed people present themselves



better during a job interview. This study also addressed a very different communication skill. All study participants were evaluated before and after a portion of participants were given access to PeopleSIM™. Once again, the evaluations of the participants showed a remarkable improvement

Job Interview Training Study



(see chart) for those who used the training system and little or no change for those who did not. Note in the graph that those with the training dramatically improved during the assessment job interview (.49) those without the training did not (-.02). Perhaps, even more important, those who used the training were offered more than twice as many job opportunities in the next 20 weeks, compared to those who did not have access to PeopleSIM™.

Conclusion

More than a million dollars have been spent evaluating the PeopleSim™ technology in research studies. The technology has an exceptional record of proven effectiveness. Research papers are available at www.simmersion.com/Publications.aspx#research. Now this same technology is being made available to help people to learn to sell more effectively. Combining this technology with new advances in sales techniques brings an unparalleled opportunity to improve sales capabilities.