
Case Study: China Auto Giant Partners with Aon to Improve Its Sales Team Assessment

A global automobile giant looking to improve its talent assessment process for its sales team partnered with Aon to develop leadership models, data analysis and implementation procedures that support optimal efficiency and overall client experience.

Overview

As China's new energy vehicles (NEV) market matures, the ongoing automobile industry transformation has become dominated by artificial intelligence (AI) and smart networks. New types of car manufacturers have placed further pressure on traditional auto firms, who are struggling with sluggish sales growth, a shrinking market share and lower profit margins. At the same time, conceptions around what a car is and its main purpose have changed. Consumers have rising expectations for cars to serve as a mobile space rather than simply a means of transportation.

During this transition, sales consultants, who serve as the direct point of contact with customers, play a decisive role in improving user experiences and driving customer purchase decisions. Building an agile and resilient workforce is therefore top of mind for companies as they strive to keep up with new market trends and evolving industry changes.

Aon's human capital team recently partnered with a global auto giant in China with more than 500 4S automobile stores (a full-service model that includes sales, service, spare parts and customer surveys) and tens of thousands of sales staff to improve its sales team talent assessment — a vital tool in cultivating competencies that positively impact business performance.

Client Situation

The client was confronted with the following challenges in its previous sales team assessment:

- Efficiency of assessment procedures was too low to meet the ever-changing needs of the team, despite having a large sales team.
- Scale and accuracy of the assessments were ambiguous, and the experience needed improvement.
- There was no unified internal talent standard, assessment language and evaluation tools, which caused a lower acceptance of assessment outcomes within the organization.

Because of these challenges, the client rebid its national sales team assessment project in 2021. Aon won the rebidding with our unique strengths in model development, assessment and operations, as well as rich project experience in the industry.

Our Approach

To kick off this initiative, we developed clear implementation procedures to overcome the above-mentioned challenges facing the client. These procedures included:

- Developed a new talent model
 - Based on analysis and assessment results of the past two years, we helped the client set up new talent standards from four perspectives — strategy, culture, performance and competitor benchmark. Following this approach helped confirm that the new talent model would not only be aligned with existing culture, but also competitive in the market.
 - The new model features seven major aspects of daily work, including interpersonal communication, career motivation, flexible thinking, independent working, teamwork spirit, personality and flexible work skills.
- Optimized assessment questions and scenarios
 - We worked with in-house talent experts to gather cases and materials to develop professional and practical questions and scenarios for the assessment based on real-world challenges, like market conditions, as well as key situations in the sales process. By including user experience and digital carriers, the assessment identified digital sales talent that was adaptable and well equipped to learn new, transformational tasks that contribute to the digital future.
 - Through interviews with senior management and reviewing previous high-performing talent and market changes, we successfully refined the client's scoring criteria. We continue to review and update assessment questions and scenarios regularly to ensure results are consistently reflective of the most realistic sales scenarios.
- Conducted assessments
 - We designed a matching matrix that combines the assessment methods with the seven ability items of the newly developed talent model. The overall assessment method includes online and offline components.
 - Online: Aon used adaptive and gamified assessment tools to provide a fair, differentiated and entertaining experience. This includes an anti-cheating system to ensure the reliability of assessment results.
 - Offline: This component was comprised of interviews, scenario simulation and feedback, testing how and why the employee behaves and makes decisions under typical conflicts. An individual report was then provided after the assessment to reflect the employee's current matching status with his/her position, personal advantages and weaknesses, and provide suggestions for future learning and development. An aggregated report was shared with each store to provide automobile dealers a clear picture of their talent team and areas for improvement.

Impact and Results

Over the course of this project, we helped the automobile giant improve its overall sales assessment program in three main areas:

- **Assessment efficiency:** Established a lean project process management model, standardized process toolkit and operation manual, while ensuring the quality of the user experience and assessment details. The number of assessment processes completed per month increased more than two-fold. Improved efficiency is extremely beneficial to the client, who assesses tens of thousands of sales staff per year.
- **Assessment experience:** Project assessors had professional backgrounds in psychology, human resources and automotive, as well as experience evaluating at least 100 personnel engaged in sales and management. Therefore, the Aon team was well equipped to help candidates understand their abilities and career development through the use of skilled feedback, while fostering a trusted environment for candidates to bring their authentic selves to work each day.
- **Assessment results:** We developed talent assessment standards and templates to optimize internal talent standards and assessment metrics. After two months into the project, acceptance of assessment results within the organization increased from approximately 60% to 80%.

Next Steps

The impact of effective talent assessment programs is far-reaching, especially in an industry where demands are quickly evolving. Using tools and processes to build a resilient and agile workforce that is fit for change and digital transformation is fundamental to success. Across the board, the automobile sector shares similar challenges in talent assessment for sales teams, including large scale but uneven competencies and frequent turnover. Our project partnership with this leading brand can be a model for the industry.

"Aon has shown keen insight into our complicated issues and difficulties in sales assessment and has taken targeted measures," notes the client's head of HR.

To learn more about our talent assessment products and services, please visit assessment.aon.com. To speak with one of our human capital experts about how we help organizations reshape and optimize their workforce for the future, please write to humancapital@aon.com.

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