

CASE STUDY

CAMPARI & MERCURI INTERNATIONAL

– THE DRINKS INDUSTRY’S PERFECT MIX



With over 50 premium and super premium brands, Campari Group is a one of the global drinks industry’s major players. Headquartered in Sesto San Giovanni, Italy, Campari’s products can be found in over 190 nations around the world, with the group employing around 4,000 people worldwide.

We spoke to Barbara Forlino, Commercial Capabilities Manager at Campari, about her role, the challenges that she faces, and how working with Mercuri International can help her to solve them.

THE CHALLENGE

Campari has always been an innovative company, from the early invention of their iconic liqueur in 1860, through innovations in packaging and design (the idea of ‘single-serve’ Campari and Soda decades ahead of the competition), through to their current status as one of the world’s largest and most respected drinks groups.

- It’s therefore no surprise that they bring this forward thinking to the way in which they transfer knowledge to both their employees and customers, taking enormous pride in their training initiatives.
- In November of 2019, Campari and Mercuri International agreed to work together on a cutting-edge sales training program and in early 2020 work began in earnest. Soon after, other world events occurred, which only served to accelerate their training ambitions.

In this context, programs were brought forward designed to refine Campari's e-commerce capabilities, including a training program that could allow Campari to maintain their close relationships with customers and high quality of service in an evolving communications environment.

Barbara wanted to design a program that would result in a sales force that was the premier knowledge expert in the sector, capable of visiting the point of sale space in a credible way and influencing mixologists and also the bar owner.

— *"I received a brief from the board to create an empowering program for a particular part of the sales force. Specifically, reviewing the role of 16 people with the aim of creating leadership for our premium portfolio."* – Barbara Forlino, Campari

The program's brief was to develop 8 key capabilities:

- Market understanding
- Brand positioning
- Brand storytelling
- Brand building
- Brand management
- Digital skills
- Negotiation
- Management of the visit

A key challenge was to address the scale of the training required, with over 150 sales executives needing to be trained to the highest level:

The idea was to create a focus on developing a centre of excellence through which information could be passed first to 16 chosen specialists, then disseminated throughout the organisation. Ultimately, this knowledge would inform the dialogue between sales, mixologists, and bar owners, raising standards across the board:

— *"...to grow the top of the pyramid in the top mixology bars, to create leadership and consumption of the premium brands of the Campari portfolio, through the power of the sales force. Empowering the sales force was a key focus."* – Barbara Forlino

— *"The challenge was a business challenge, but also a challenge to standardise and evolve the culture of our people."* – Barbara Forlino

THE SOLUTION

So what was the first step in solving the challenge? Well, to begin with, Mercuri's consultants sat down with Barbara and discussed the benefits of the Digital Learning Journey and how it could be applied to Campari's specific needs. The ability to not just reach large numbers of trainees, but also focus the teaching process with one-to-one coaching.

— *"We discovered (Mercuri's) capability to play global and act local - to follow a single person and to give us a digital solution. Very easy, very smart, and 100% adapted to our picture. There was a (mix of) international credibility, innovation, digital offering, and one-to-one care of a person."* – Barbara Forlino

TESTIMONIAL

"We have a sales force composed of more than 150 people. 16 of the people on this project I refer to as 'premium specialists HoReCa' (Hotels, Restaurants, Catering). Several years ago we came up with a new group with a particular mission, in a particular class - point of sales."

— Barbara Forlino, Campari

The training program was designed to form part of a larger coherent strategy - as such, a close partnership between Mercuri and Campari was critical to the success of the overall project.

One of the key areas of focus was how to bring the same quality of training that face-to-face provides into a digital setting. Mercuri designed a system which specified two kinds of virtual meeting. First, a more pedagogical approach, with recipients being trained in such areas as value-based selling. Second, the creation of a 'sales lab', which offered a more practical experience, with sales representatives being asked to present case studies which could then be further evaluated.

This dual approach - the theoretical 'top-down' aspect and the practical 'bottom up' response - both generated genuine real world skills, but also brought a sense of community and collaboration which was particularly important with a remotely located workforce, replicating the 'human touch':

— *"We inverted the rules - we asked the salesforce to prepare and to present to us, and throughout the presentation Mercuri could verify that their theory converted to a winning behaviour. We crystalised the concept and this concept then became a virtuous habit."* – Barbara Forlino

The training itself consisted of a bespoke program that focused on the development of two core areas. First, personalised value selling, broadly based upon the concepts of value-based selling but specifically adapted to Campari's customer demographic. Second, hard skill development - i.e. detailed knowledge - relating to six key Campari product lines.

The combination of these two allowed Campari's premium specialists to ultimately speak not just with complete authority regarding their portfolio, but to phrase the information in such a way that it would have maximum impact with the customer, driving both revenue and satisfaction.

Furthermore there was a drive to develop a sense of partnership - a meaningful dialogue with the customer that could transform the relationship into a genuine 'win-win' outcome, based on ongoing and constant support.

Previously, Campari had never before offered the sales force a personalised training path of this type, relying more on on-demand courses. Furthermore, product training was not carried out digitally, nor was there a specific division for the development of skills.

While the move to digital training was already of great importance, it became business-critical in the pandemic era, as teams were unable to train in more conventional conditions.

Mercuri's training approach has revolutionised the way that Campari applies training in terms of both format and scale, with the digital learning path opening up possibilities to reach a much wider audience.

TESTIMONIAL

"I think that flexibility - the flexibility of the team - is another of Mercuri's capabilities. The quality of the digital team is incredible. When I ask specific questions I get a quick, intelligent response that meets the challenges that arise - proactive solutions to problems that are one step ahead and always innovative."

— **Barbara Forlino**, Campari

THE RESULT

Less than a year into the program, it's already yielding results. For example, Campari has developed an ecosystem grid upon which sales team members can record information as to the best ways to get results from specific bar owners. This way, knowledge is shared, but it's also possible for Barbara to see the tangible results of training. Furthermore, the unique way that the training program had been developed allowed an element of continuity during a state of historic disruption to the bar industry:

— *“Our people still had a learning path despite two lockdowns! So, when it comes to ‘digital’? digital means to be able to continue offering great training and nourishing a sense of community when conventional social interactions are not possible - maintaining the cohesion and motivation of the whole group.”* – Barbara Forlino

Measuring specific results - particularly in a year so different from those that have gone before - is hard, but Barbara is more pragmatic:

— *“I see results in terms of participation, in terms of time spent on the digital platform, because I have the possibility to share with every person their level of progress in terms of capabilities - both in terms of soft skills and product skills - through the quality of the digital interaction and the measurable metrics, such as homework and meeting KPIs such as sales targets.”*
– Barbara Forlino

THE MERCURI INTERNATIONAL / CAMPARI TRAINING PROGRAM

- Soft and hard skills: 1 Campari Value Selling + 6 product modules
- Customized digital modules: 7 modules
- People involved: from 16 to 139
- Average training time in 2020 classroom + digital modules: 34h 55min per participant
- Number of times platform accessed: 3268 of which 1,635 from MY LEARNING APP

Campari will also be developing their certification process, whereby participants in the program can demonstrate not just that they've received information or attended a course, but that they can apply these skills in relevant real-world scenarios.

So far, the training program has not just developed the 16 premium specialists but 15 further restaurant specialists. Now, the program has been opened to more than 150 sales representatives, with ambitions to apply the program globally.

And on Barbara's wish list?

— *“It concerns augmented reality - the virtualization of the creation of a cocktail! From an innovation point of view, I'd like to have a platform capable of helping a single person to create a cocktail...maybe with tools, with gestures, using augmented reality to give a sense of movement...That's what I want from Mercuri next!”* – Barbara Forlino

— *“I think areas such as virtual experiences have potential - an immersive plant visit, for example, to share the combination of passion and process that goes into Campari's products.”* – Barbara Forlino

CONCLUSION

When Mercuri say 'global reach, local expertise', it's more than a tagline. One way of viewing the difference between 'ok' and 'great' training is the ability for sales training consultants to gain a profound understanding of a business's needs and work with them to design a training solution that works for them and their workforce, supporting them at every step.

It's all about personal relationships. Referring to her Mercuri consultants, Barbara has the following to say:

— *“...Mercuri has achieved a genuine credibility with the salesforce because they can speak the language of sales but also coach at the same time. They have a profound understanding of the sales and negotiation process and the challenges specific to Horeca, so there's a trust there. It's the person that makes the difference.”* – Barbara Forlino

FUTURE PROOF YOUR BUSINESS

As we've seen this year, challenges and circumstances change - often faster than we could imagine. A great training partner is one that doesn't just anticipate changes but has the ability to adapt to them when they occur, helping a business to cope with whatever lies ahead.

Want to learn how Mercuri can work with you to revolutionize your sales training? **Get in touch with us today!**