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A Mechanical Engineer's Transition to Ag-Tech

Through PATTA's support in agricultural sales force effectiveness, Naeem Sukhera has established five new product display centers for enhancing Dairy Solution's presence in Sindh, Balochistan, and Punjab



“I have benefitted immensely from PATTA's sales training and learnt about effective selling strategies including customer prospecting, sales call, customer satisfaction, and after-sales services!”

Naeem Sukhera graduated in Mechanical Engineering from Superior College Lahore in 2013 but felt very passionate about making significant contributions to Pakistan's agricultural sector development. With his mechanical engineering background, Sukhera joined Dairy Solutions - Pakistan's leading dairy farm equipment supplier - as Assistant Technical Manager. Due to his prominent good people skills, Dairy Solutions transferred Sukhera to the Sales Department in 2015 as Regional Sales Manager to help increase company sales. “We were achieving sales targets, but I also knew that we must improve our capacities to enhance sales. To be able to compete among the key agri-tech players in Pakistan, we needed to adopt new selling techniques by first creating a sales framework,” explains Sukhera.

Sukhera also realized that he was unable to present an influencing sales pitch to farmers and felt the need to acquire certain selling skills to become a result-oriented sales professional. “Things were going well but as an engineer, I could not connect the dots and align our sales framework with the overall vision of Dairy Solutions,” says Sukhera. He then found out about a two-day “Sales Force Effectiveness Training” organized by the four-year USAID Pakistan Agricultural Technology Transfer Activity (PATTA) in 2018. USAID PATTA seeks to improve Pakistan's agri-tech sector by building the capacity of 37 private sector agribusiness through a broad-based support package. This includes skills enhancement opportunities to significantly increase agricultural technology sales and expand business networks. The project is committed to helping agricultural technology companies discover new ways to reach farmers, enhance their marketing and sales tactics, and grow their ag technology portfolio.

Sukhera participated in PATTA's sales training in November 2018 in Lahore. This was his first-ever experience even though as an engineer he had previously attended various technical trainings. He learnt about prospecting new customers, customizing services, doorstep services, and expansion of new business areas and products. During the training, he was encouraged to develop meaningful relationships with manufacturers and distributors and coordinate promotional activities to advance ag-tech sales. In addition, he was trained on leveraging new business opportunities and sustained business relationships management in the post-sales phase through after-sales services. “I started feeling the transition from an engineer to a dynamic sales professional. The real-time case studies helped me to think out-of-the-box and find solutions for the farmers in our products and services. I learnt that the customer-first approach is valuable,” explains Sukhera.

Lessons learnt from the sales training brought forth many accolades for Sukhera. He confidently secured four new dealers to promote Dairy Solutions' products in new districts across Pakistan. He was also able to establish the first-ever agricultural products display center in Karachi, Quetta, Sahiwal, Mian Channu, and Khanewal. In addition, Sukhera achieved a 25-30 percent increase in company sales through these initiatives and exceeded his monthly target of PKR 2.5 million by PKR 650,000.

Based on Sukhera's excellent performance as a result of PATTA's sales training, Dairy Solutions has selected him to participate in an international sales training on innovative agricultural technologies and products in France. This incredible opportunity will help him learn global functions of agribusiness sales and marketing and network with international retailers and key agri-tech players.