

Successfully Managing Large Accounts at Emerson Process Management

Delivering complete process management solutions to major league players in the oil & gas, chemical & pharmaceutical industries demands high quality customer relations based on good teamwork and a clear business understanding. Using Miller Heiman's Strategic Selling® and Large Account Management Process (LAMP®) programmes, Emerson Process Management has built an approach geared to long-term partnerships.

Emerson Process Management is a member of the Emerson group of companies, which lead the way in innovative process management solutions. It was formed when Fisher and Rosemount merged in 1993 and today provides process automation solutions that enable the process industries to build the revolutionary PlantWeb architecture, which changes the economics of process automation. The company's customer base is concentrated in three key areas - oil and gas, petrochemicals and chemicals and top 25 pharmaceutical firms - and includes such prestigious names as Shell, BASF, AGIP, and Rhône-Poulenc.

The decision to concentrate on building relationships with accounts of this magnitude dates back to the merger. Management consultants working with them at the time saw this as the best long-term strategy for the new company. In addition, being a bottom-line driven organisation Emerson Process Management recognised that managing and growing these critical accounts was essential to delivering results for its shareholders. In most businesses ten per cent of the accounts bring in over fifty per cent of the revenue.

But in order to become more proactive and more customer-oriented, the company identified two key requirements:

- ❑ **an effective sales process for building strategic relationships with their best customers**
- ❑ **a framework for pursuing large international projects, having previously relied on spreadsheet information and the creativity of individuals within the sales operation.**

"Emerson Process Management is structured vertically in divisions, each with its own product lines, culture and business goals. To deliver the seamless 'horizontal' solutions the market expects we needed a mechanism that aligns the organisation with the customer," explains Victor DeCock, Director of Training and Development responsible for Europe, Middle East and Africa.

"The aim was to find a way of bringing together different members of the account team to develop a strategy and action plan that delivers the corporate results that matter most to customers."

DeCock and his colleagues evaluated a number of sales programmes before deciding to implement Miller Heiman, which was already being used by other divisions in North America. In 1997 he delivered the first Miller Heiman training

to four newly appointed Corporate Account Directors. It combined the Large Account Management Process (LAMP®) which stimulates account teams to analyse and understand customers, and Strategic Selling®, which focuses on the positioning that must precede every sales call.

Since then the company has implemented Strategic Selling on three levels. In global terms, the process is applied both to international projects (or marquee accounts as they are referred to) including managing bottom-line responsibility, and to corporate accounts. It also underpins their sales approach to large accounts that are based within a particular region or country.

In Europe to date an estimated 1000 people have been through the Strategic Selling programme and 250 have attended the LAMP workshops. As a Miller Heiman Client Associate certified to deliver the programmes, Victor DeCock has been actively involved in rolling out the training in different countries. Although English is widely spoken in Northern and Central Europe, language presents more of a problem in Southern Europe and training is given in French and German. In other respects he finds the programme adapts easily to different audiences.

Now that Strategic Selling is used for all Emerson Process Management's global and international project pursuits, it is mandatory for sales staff to complete its integral analysis mechanism, the 'Blue Sheet'. Consequently they are forced to think about the issues pertinent to the outcome - who are the buying influences and what are their key win results, the competition, customer criteria and strengths and weaknesses in their current position. Computerised versions of the sheets

then link into a database of current projects which can be accessed via the company Intranet to provide an up-to-date snapshot of account activity at any one time.

"By following the Blue Sheet the account team has a structure and common language for deciding on a strategy and taking action. Its real value is as a communications tool that makes it easy for team members to exchange information about a sales situation, brainstorm ideas and even challenge approaches," says Victor. "For example, managers can access the details that sales people normally carry round in their heads and make suggestions, say, about contacts they might approach to move the process forward."

Better teamwork and focusing individuals on achieving the best technical and economic solution for the customer has helped the company to become more effective in winning large projects. Emerson Process Management has also used the LAMP programme, which presents an overview of all the available and required customer data, to move the company towards a more proactive approach that anticipates rather than merely reacts to customer needs.

Together the two Miller Heiman programmes form the central layer of a 3-tier training model - the Performance Selling Pyramid - which provides the sales team with all the processes and techniques for success. It comprises fundamental skills such as professional and consultative processes, negotiation, and strategic sales presentations; planning and preparation (Strategic Selling and LAMP); and managing people and performance.

To assess the impact of the training on the organisation Emerson Process Management uses a number of measures. This includes evaluating feedback on courses, whether people have achieved their learning objectives and how they apply them in real life. The company also publishes success stories where 'Blue and Gold Sheet' strategic account analyses have contributed to obtaining business.

Although this assessment does not extend to bottom-line figures the processes are nevertheless perceived to be having a positive impact on both the number and size of contracts being won. DeCock's goal is to ensure this progress continues and to maximise the value to the company because 'the true benefits come into play when sales people are in front of a customer'.

Various methods embed the approach into the company culture. To reinforce the techniques learnt at the workshop sales people can attend a one-day refresher course that takes

them through completing the 'Blue Sheet', applies the process to new and old situations, reiterates the concepts, and provides practice opportunities. A coaching module is also available to encourage different levels of sales management to coach and challenge people. The company is also solutions and consultancy.

Using sales processes that supports business strategy by delivering more comprehensive account information has several important advantages. It allows the company to manage each customer as a complete entity, from the perspective of a joint venture partner rather than simply a supplier. Being able to add value in this way also potentially impacts revenues by expanding penetration and decreasing the importance of price sensitivity. Above all the company has a proven mechanism for co-ordinating its various skills and resources to produce the best outcome for its customers and form enduring and profitable relationships.