

Interleasing - Driven By Adding Value

Interleasing is one of the premier names in fleet management, providing around 2000 organisations with a complete service covering the acquisition, funding, management and disposal of vehicles.

The Company began trading in the mid 1960s and is now owned by the finance arm of General Motors. Headquartered in Birmingham and with four regional offices, it is responsible for sourcing and managing almost 80,000 vehicles in the UK. Its clients range from the public sector and large multi-nationals to small businesses.

In this fiercely competitive sector, Interleasing has established itself as a flexible and responsive business partner. By evolving its services to meet changing client needs and challenging conventional thinking, it provides comprehensive, tailored solutions to a wide variety of fleet management requirements. This philosophy of delivering added value has served it well as the market has become increasingly commoditised.

The process is founded on a consultancy approach that builds up a clear picture of the client's specific personnel and financial objectives. Interleasing's 35 strong sales team also keeps abreast of developments in both the automotive and financial markets, ensuring that the most appropriate management and funding options are proposed. This specialist expertise and high level technical support combined with a desire to eliminate fleet management problems in the most effective way are the chief elements which maintain the

company's reputation for providing fully researched and resourced solutions.

Interleasing recognises that its key differentiator is being a listening company and providing informed, unbiased advice. This requires a thorough knowledge of the client's industry, its profile and the specific dynamics of its business.

A robust sales management process is integral to achieving that open dialogue with clients and to satisfying their needs as part of a long-term business relationship.

Banishing the Black Art

Starting in late 1999, Head of Sales, Julian Humphreys has overseen the introduction of a structured programme incorporating Miller Heiman's Strategic Selling®, Conceptual Selling® and LAMP®(Large Account Management Process). It was hearing presentations by Stephen Heiman and Miller Heiman client, Guardian Royal Exchange at a seminar organised by 'Winning Business' that convinced him that the company would benefit from a more systematic, less individualistic sales approach. The goal was to achieve a common method across the organisation - one that could be managed, and just as importantly, measured.

As Julian Humphreys explains, "There is an element of 'black art' in selling which we wanted to move away from. For example, it's important to have a common language that everyone understands instead of people having their different interpretations."

Interleasing worked with an experienced independent training consultant to integrate Miller Heiman methodologies into its general business strategy. The entire salesforce has now attended Strategic Selling® and Conceptual Selling workshops. As a measure of how the techniques and terminology are becoming embedded in the culture, all major business opportunities are now evaluated using the Blue and Green Sheets - the programmes' respective analysis tools.

Guesswork is a thing of the past

Now before meeting customers, sales people are able to properly identify and reach the buying influences. LAMP®, which brings a similar discipline to managing client relationships at all levels, has also been adopted by the Major Corporate Accounts Team.

Using the computerised system, managers can instantly access up-to-date details of sales situations and track their progress. However, during informal sales sessions, it's the printed Blue Sheet that consultants pin on the wall to help focus their thoughts. "It is an excellent way of sharing knowledge and ideas," says Julian Humphreys, "and it puts the client account's needs firmly at the front of the sales process every time. Completing the Green Sheet highlights valid reasons for visiting the client and allows us to measure

our progress against their objectives."

As with any new initiative, resistance to change is always a potential obstacle. Julian Humphreys attributes the fact that Interleasing experienced no such problems to a combination of the training consultant's skills and the strength of the methodology.

"Our sales people have embraced the system because they can see that it really does improve their chances of winning business," he says.

But aware of the need to reinforce processes on a daily basis, he is running Coaching for Managers workshops to ensure Interleasing gains maximum value from its investment. The company also recognises that top down commitment is vital and has involved senior managers in workshops and Blue Sheet sessions to help maintain the programme's momentum.

In the near future Interleasing expects to be able to measure the impact of Miller Heiman programmes on the organisation. But already Julian Humphreys is in no doubt of the immediate benefits. As he concludes: "Interleasing's point of difference is understanding our client's business in-depth and putting forward solutions that take all their needs into account. By clearly identifying what we know and do not know about a sales situation Miller Heiman processes underpin that philosophy and strengthen our partnerships. They have also increased our efficiency as a sales organisation - rather than wasting our efforts, we can focus our resources more effectively on business we are capable of winning."