

A healthy sales outlook for Siemens Healthcare



“The trainers have proved to be first-class and Huthwaite International has worked in partnership to create tailored training programmes for two very different groups of employees involved in our complex and extended sales process.”

Dariusz Szczepankowski, director, Siemens Healthcare

Siemens Healthcare has been working successfully with Huthwaite International for several years as part of a broader service team project in its Polish operation.

In looking to improve its sales and support offering, the main goal has been to perfect the communication skills internally between the sales and specialist service teams and also between each Siemens Healthcare Service representative and the client.

“We see the need to work with clients in a homogenous and coherent way as a key priority within the business,” says director, Dariusz Szczepankowski. *“Selling medical service equipment within our market is typically an extended multi-level process,”* he confirms. *“This requires everyone in the client-facing team to communicate effectively and professionally, in revealing and agreeing customer needs, handling objections and moving the buying process forward for our clients.”*

“Good ‘soft’ communication skills are a very important part of the process of building client

relationships, for both our sales people and service specialists,” he believes. *“Our objective was to integrate the new sales process within Siemens Healthcare and enable the service team to further contribute to the client relationship by recognising needs, especially during project implementations.”*

In looking for an appropriate training solution, Siemens defined ‘selling’ to include not simply the promotion of its medical equipment portfolio but also more broadly the company through sales and service support. *“In selling a complete sales and service proposition,”* confirms Szczepankowski, *“the idea of a common training programme for our sales and service teams emerged for the first time. By providing a common language and presenting a unified ‘one company’ image to the market in this way, we could achieve greater internal effectiveness and stronger client relationships and loyalty.”*

Proven solution, proven success

Siemens explored a number of possible solutions but quickly settled on Huthwaite International as best-placed to deliver against its demanding requirements. In selecting the right provider, Siemens placed

great emphasis on the quality of the process as well as the training content, looking for an ability to work together closely in developing a bespoke programme tailored to meet the needs and expectations of sales and service.

“Huthwaite International showed that they clearly understood our business,” he recalls. *“We were also impressed with the work they had already undertaken successfully with other departments within Siemens Poland.”*

In a phased implementation programme, the first step was to undertake SPIN® Selling and Negotiation programmes with sales and service managers, followed by an overview of selling for the larger service specialists team, all of whom were trained engineers.

Particular emphasis was given to handling objections and working with ‘low reactor’ clients, with individual training sessions targeted at each problem area and how each team should manage them.

Huthwaite International also delivered teamworking skills training to enhance inter-departmental co-operation and communication skills.

Included in the teamworking skills training were University graduates on work placement with Siemens at the time. The graduates integrated so well that they now have secured permanent positions with the Healthcare Service Team. *“This trainee programme is an excellent example of how we have worked with Huthwaite in developing tailored programmes,”* says Szczepankowski. *“The key to success here has been in focusing the attention of new young employees on the critical importance of communications skills in understanding our clients’ business and the markets in which they work.”*

Follow-up coaching

For Siemens, ongoing reinforcement of sales and communication skills learnt in the classroom has been an essential element in ensuring the benefits are realised long-term. From the beginning a formal process of ‘cyclical refreshment’ was established, to revisit aspects of the training, discussing how new skills should be put into practice in real-life sales situations, analysing calls and sharing competencies.

“This refresher programme lets us see what progress has been achieved at any point in time,”

says Szczepankowski. *“We can then plan to address specific sales and communication skills that still need to be worked on”.*

Measurable success

The result has been a significant and measurable improvement in sales performance.

“However,” says Aleksandra Szlachcikowska, account manager, Huthwaite Poland, *“equally important for Siemens has been the improved relationship the company has achieved with its clients.”*

“The service specialists are now seen as partners in discussing the profitable development of each client’s business. At the same time, the sales and service teams have a common understanding and language in looking at opportunities for client development. This ensures that Siemens presents a single, professional face in all its communications with the customer.”

The Huthwaite training has also been well-received internally, both at a company and individual level. Corporately, the new sales approach is seen as aligning more closely to the client’s buying process and partnership structure. For sales and service employees too, the training has given them a new

level of confidence in helping build successful long-term relationships.

Looking ahead, more regular follow-up work is planned, in order to perfect the new skills learned. *“We do not believe that training is a one-off project but a process of continuous improvement,”* says Szczepankowski.

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