



Bayer takes a Europe-wide approach with Huthwaite

From its beginnings as a dyestuffs manufacturer way back in 1863, Bayer AG has grown to become one of the world's largest and most diversified chemical and healthcare companies.

In mid-2001, its Near Patient Testing (NPT) Division, part of Bayer Diagnostics, recognised the need to standardise its approach to the European market. "As one of the leading providers of point-of-care and critical care products to GPs and hospitals - from A&E and intensive care to general wards and laboratory personnel - we were dealing with increasingly professional buyers in rapidly changing healthcare markets," recalls Adrian Ralph, European NPT Marketing Manager.

An initial analysis of its individual sales operations across Europe found a wide range of practices.

"Some of our branches (countries) had previous exposure to SPIN®

sales techniques, some were still in the implementation phase and others had undergone a variety of different training programmes," he confirms. "The result was a real mix of skills and competencies."

Adrian himself had very positive earlier experience of Huthwaite's SPIN® training and, following a market review, SPIN® was selected as being the model most relevant to the NPT division's needs:

- SPIN®'s consultative approach was ideally suited to the company's broader 'Customer Focused Salesforce' programmes, designed to enable sales teams to understand the customer's point of view as the key to developing better solutions;

- Huthwaite's ability to deliver best practice training in local languages across Europe would ensure a uniquely high level of consistency;

- In order to present a strong, uniform image to the market, Bayer also wanted to ensure that written materials 'talked the same language' as the sales teams. As a result, SPIN® would be embedded in all centrally produced marketing collateral for product launches and other sales initiatives.

In late 2001 programmes got under way in Germany and the four Nordic countries, selected as branches where there was the greatest potential impact, and who had expressed a high level of interest in the project. Cont...

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Adrian Ralph, European NPT Marketing Manager



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The ability to create a positive environment around SPIN® early on was seen as critical in generating confidence and momentum as the programme was extended to other countries.

So how has the programme been received?

"Reaction to date has been really enthusiastic," says Adrian. "Almost all our NPT sales teams throughout Europe have completed SPIN® Selling skills training and, as a result of its success, the programme is now being extended to sister divisions within Bayer Diagnostics. Supporting materials are consistent with the new sales approach, and overall the project is meeting our expectations," he says.

Adrian, Bayer's HR department and Huthwaite are currently working to ensure that the best practice lessons learned are maintained, through both face-to-face and remote coaching. Reflecting the increasing complexity and professionalism on the buying side, training for improving negotiation and account management strategies has also been of interest in specific countries.

Adrian has been impressed with Huthwaite's flexibility and willingness to adapt training materials to fit Bayer's precise requirements and with the support provided at both central and local level. "In recent years, the healthcare market has seen much change," he points out.

"In the face of growing buying power we have seen increasing product commoditisation, with delivery, training and education, for example, now merely hygiene factors.

"Today, real vendor differentiation and buyer loyalty depends on building customer relationships based on confidence," he believes. "In such a competitive environment, Huthwaite's SPIN® approach is proving especially valuable in helping us build that confidence, through developing solutions based on mutually identified need."