

Sun Microsystems - a total solutions approach

Sun Microsystems has long been one of the world's leading IT systems providers, with an excellent track record and reputation. However, the organisation has discovered that it is less well recognised as a total solutions provider, and is taking actions to correct this misconception.

As part of this focus on the total solutions business, Sun North Europe Business School has instituted a series of training initiatives designed to ensure that its major accounts team has the skills and knowledge to focus on the customer's needs, and to propose solutions which match those needs.

The training brings together account managers from the whole of the Nordic region plus Belgium and Holland, for a series of five training programmes, which focus respectively on SPIN® Selling skills, Account Strategy for Major Sales, Persuasive sales proposals and presentations, Negotiation skills, and Teamworking. A pilot group of 24 account managers embarked on the training in September and the response has been so positive that a further 24 people began to follow the same path in February.

The proposals and presentations workshop was of special interest to the delegates since it was the first time anyone had been trained to construct more effective proposals. The course began with a review of an existing document, where delegates were alarmed to find the content tended to focus on Sun and its solutions rather than the customer's needs and how these could be satisfied by the Sun solution.

Huthwaite's Graham Short who manages the Sun account comments, "These findings are not at all unusual. When we work with most clients on proposals they are horrified to discover that a lot of the hard work of the face-to-face sales calls is wasted if the proposal is not good enough to get them on the shortlist. Even worse, a poor presentation can lose you the

business when you have survived to the final stages of the sale, at a time when you have made the maximum investment in pursuing it."

Sales Operations Manager at Sun Microsystems, Jonas Tindberg says "This is a very important initiative for Sun. We want to ensure all our salespeople are customer-focussed, and that they have the skills to explore the customer's needs in depth. We chose Huthwaite because they can supply the whole range of skills training we require, and because of their previous experience of integrating the training with the Siebel CRM system, which is another part of our initiative, to make sure we are truly customer-focussed and that we are offering total solutions to their needs."



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