

IN TUNE WITH THE FUTURE

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL GLOBAL BRAND TAKES EFFECTIVE CHANNEL MANAGEMENT AND CONSTANT INNOVATION. SALES PROGRAMMES PROVIDER, **MILLER HEIMAN** HAS BEEN RE-EVALUATING ITS OWN STRATEGY IN A BID TO INCREASE ITS MARKET PRESENCE. **LYNDA MARSTON** MARKETING MANAGER - EUROPE SHARES HER EXPERIENCE.

When Madonna married recently in Scotland, the press followed en masse filling every hotel room in the surrounding area. Some may find it surprising that she still excites such a media frenzy after more than fifteen years in the entertainment business. But whereas other stars have faded, she constantly re-invents her persona to stay in touch with her audience, and finds new ways of communicating with them. In many respects she has achieved what many sales organisations strive to do - build a successful global brand.

Over the last decade businesses have also had to adapt to dramatic changes, largely as a result of technological development. Faced with increased competition many have been forced to re-evaluate their sales

objectives and marketing approach. As we have seen, presenting the right image is important and might entail introducing a new corporate identity and positioning statement. But more fundamentally, it requires a thorough scrutiny of distribution strategy, product portfolio and methods of product/service delivery. Miller Heiman has been going through this process with the goal of increasing its presence in Europe as a provider of strategic sales programmes.

Undoubtedly one of the key challenges for any internationally-oriented sales organisation is selecting the right route to market. At one time it was simply a matter of deciding between a direct or indirect approach. Now the choices are more complex as companies face stiffer competition and vie to maximise their market

penetration and customer satisfaction. To break into new sectors and increase market share it has been necessary to adopt a multi-channel 'push-pull' approach.

Miller Heiman's own point of entry has traditionally been through a network of highly professional independent training consultants. The approach serves us well and will continue to be central to our sales strategy. But like other organisations with global aspirations, we recognise the need to complement existing expertise in order to accelerate expansion and improve delivery of our sales programmes beyond the current fifteen languages.

The company is broadening its scope in two ways. Firstly, we are dedicating resources to developing direct relationships with the premier

names in IT, telecomms, finance and professional services. Secondly, we are partnering with larger European distributors that have a strong track record in key sectors like IT and financial services. Typically these training consultancies specialise in re-engineering sales processes and will provide high quality advice, integrating Miller Heiman programmes into their solutions together with their own or other licensed products. This strategy is already helping to build our presence in the UK and the Benelux countries and is now being rolled out into France and Germany.

But what are the implications of going down this route? Any vendor that is dedicated to channel sales as a significant component of its strategy must be committed to managing optimum partner relationships and performance based on mutual profitability. In many cases this has translated into 'buying mindshare' where the results have been only as good as the last meal bought. The challenge now for organisations seeking to improve the effectiveness of their channel, and increase revenue, profitability and overall customer satisfaction, is to move beyond 'Relationship to Partnership'.

Miller Heiman Strategic Selling[®] and Large Account Management Processsm/LAMP[®], already provide a mechanism for strengthening the affinity between suppliers and customers – but predominantly for direct sales. The premise being that companies must first identify the value of their product or service and understand the characteristics of their ideal customer before they can look at sales objectively, eliminate waste and maximise profits. Only with a systematic framework in place can they begin to manage all aspects of the sales process.

The new Channel Partner Management Programme[®] introduces the same rigour into managing indirect sales. It builds on the existing concepts to create a purpose-designed method-

ology and supporting tool set - offering immediate payback. Within days of completing the workshop, it is possible to implement a viable action plan that increases revenue, improves partner loyalty and properly aligns the channel focus between the two parties.

No serious global player can afford to stand still. Keeping abreast of the market means regularly reviewing our core products to ensure that language and best practice standards remain relevant. Clients must also be able to take advantage of emerging trends. For example, now that remote and home working is commonplace, organisations also need to be able to offer more flexible, Internet-based learning. With this in mind Miller Heiman is adding a new workshop format. We will continue to run two-day workshops for our core programmes. But delegates will also have the option of getting to grips with the basic concepts via the Web before attending a one-day event. Combining these approaches will, we believe, make programme implementation more convenient and reduce the costs associated with sales personnel being 'off the road'.

With staff retention a concern for employers, self-paced learning can also prove highly motivational – whilst making it easier to reach sales goals.

Attention has also focused on ways of complementing and extending the classroom experience. We know that one of the biggest challenges for clients introducing our sales processes is how to maintain the initial momentum and bring about lasting changes in behaviour. They are looking for improvements immediately – not in two years' time. Yet experience shows that without active reinforcement, retention of these concepts slips.

Web technology is proving enormously beneficial in facilitating learning post-event. Our 'Web-based Reinforcement Programme' is a good example. These tools are designed to help organisations preserve the value of their original investment in Strategic Selling[®]. Essentially it's a distance learning approach. Sales people log on at their convenience, are able to measure their knowledge of concepts and gain access to relevant interactive reinforcement modules. Sales managers, on the other hand, have a transparent mechanism for monitoring individual and team progress. They can back this up using tailor-made Manager's Coachingsm tools that ensure techniques become second nature for qualifying prospects, identifying resources needed and closing business.

Of course, all these changes which will benefit Miller Heiman clients over the coming weeks and months did not happen overnight. They have evolved through a process of research, consultation and careful planning. These new developments will enhance clients' relationships with direct customers, the channel and their staff and in doing so put us on a better footing for future growth. In other words, we aim to be more in tune with our marketplace than ever before.



MILLER HEIMAN HAS WORKED WITH ORGANISATIONS AROUND THE GLOBE TO HELP THEM DEVELOP SALES MANAGEMENT PROCESSES IN ORDER TO MANAGE THEIR CUSTOMER INTERFACE AND GAIN PREDICTABLE AND REPEATABLE BUSINESS. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CALL LYNDA MARSTON ON 01908 211212

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