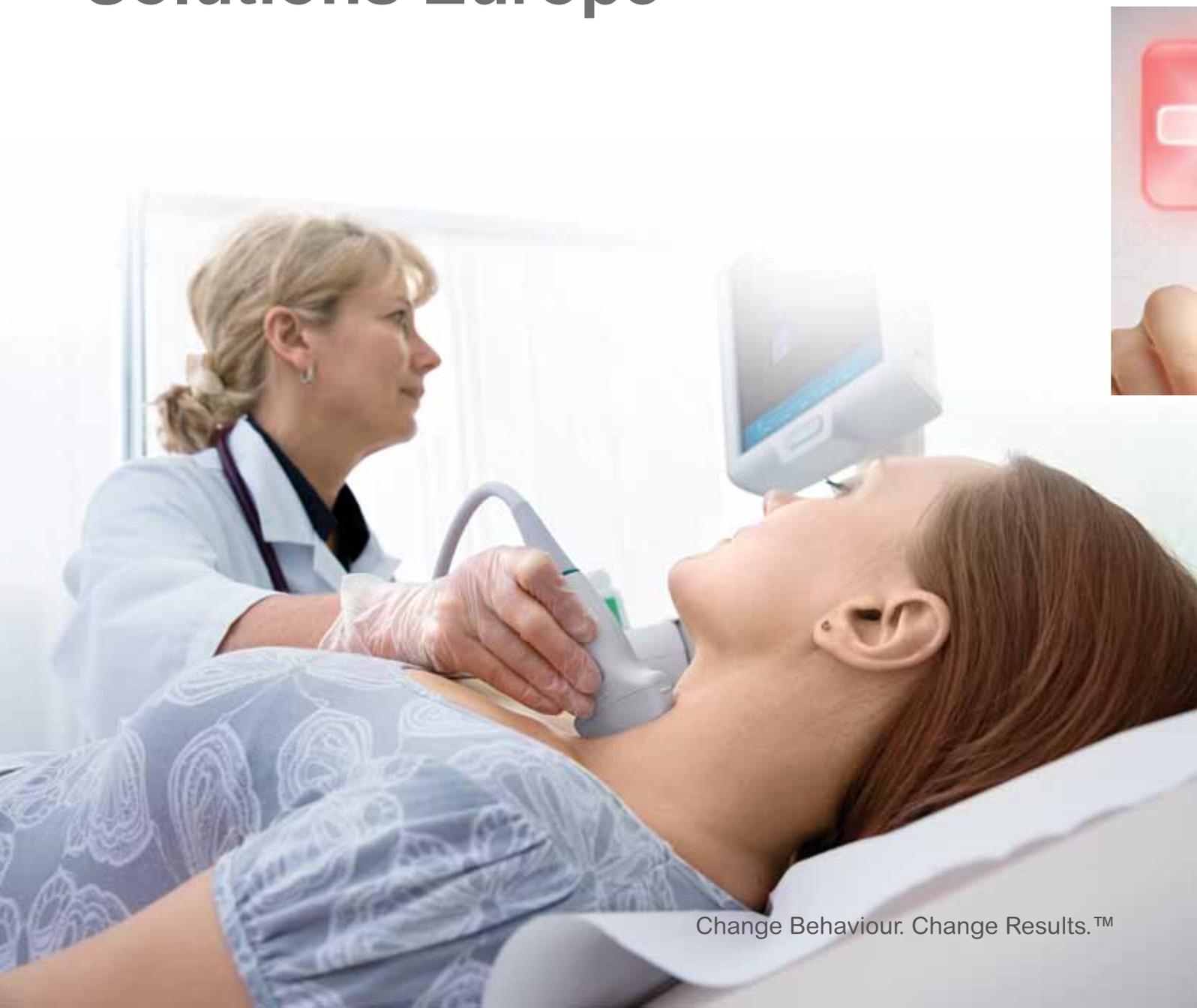


All Questions lead to SPIN® for Swisslog Healthcare Solutions Europe



“I believe we will be reaping the rewards for years to come.”

Massimo Zagnoni, export sales manager and marketing ADMS director, Swisslog.

Hospital logistics experts turn to Huthwaite International to help develop consultative sales skills

These days technology does far more than just automate certain processes – it can often transform the way an organisation is run. As a result, the decision to invest in certain automated systems is often no longer down to short-term costs, but depends on long-term value and benefits. The final choice of provider rarely rests on one manager, but is often the subject of long debate between CEOs and operational, IT or financial directors - and across the entire board.

This change has affected the way many businesses sell their products and services – and Swisslog Healthcare Solutions is no exception. Based as its name suggests in Switzerland, Swisslog has evolved from its former status as a supplier of automation systems to a consulting partner in the implementation of integrated logistics solutions. To date, Swisslog's Healthcare Solutions division has installed logistics solutions in more than 3,000 hospitals around the world. These automated logistics solutions for hospitals and other healthcare organisations greatly reduce the manual flow of materials and associated information, making supply chains and related transport

far more efficient, faster, safer and cost-effective. In the area of medication management, Swisslog's solutions make a major contribution to the Healthcare Solutions division mission: save time, save money, save lives. In other words, its solutions can change the way its customers work for the better.

Consequently, Swisslog Healthcare Solutions Europe recognised that it was no longer enough for its sales people to talk to prospective customers just about the technical features of a particular system. Even those healthcare facilities not directly affected by the current economic situation were experiencing increased pressure to supply higher quality care while keeping costs at a minimum. They were looking for advice and help in solving their logistics and supply chain challenges. Swisslog sales people needed to take a higher level view and talk about the operational benefits the systems would bring to individual hospitals or pharmacies.

But Swisslog Healthcare Solutions Europe faced its own challenge here. *“It wasn't enough to leave our sales teams to their own devices to pick up the right methods and techniques to go from selling products to selling a complete solution and services. With several offices and a capillary sales network in Europe, we needed a consistent approach across the region and a training expert which specialised in teaching the skills*

needed for such major, long-term solution selling,” explains Massimo Zagnoni, Swisslog export sales and marketing ADMS director.

After considering a range of training providers, Swisslog chose Huthwaite International to deliver the required courses. Huthwaite is well-known for its rigorous research into the behaviour of successful sales teams. A few decades ago this led to the development of what is now known as SPIN® Selling Skills and, although this technique is being constantly updated, it remains the most widely-validated model of effective sales behaviour.

“At the time, we wanted to raise the game of our sales teams by developing their ability to focus potential customers on existing problems and the benefits they might achieve implementing the Swisslog solutions. Leveraging problems and benefits is key to move customers towards the decision to change. The sales team was looking forward to developing further the ability to clearly identify our customers' needs. In order to do this we had to be able to ask the right searching questions. This is an effective way to gather the relevant information and ensure that our solutions precisely address the customers' pain points. This questioning approach lies at the heart of SPIN® Selling,” says Zagnoni.

There were also more practical elements to the decision. Huthwaite could provide consistent solutions in different locations whilst incorporating the local knowledge required. As a behaviour-based skills model, SPIN® could be tailored to fit the individual aspects of Swisslog's systems and services in the environment of hospitals and healthcare organisations.

The project had the support of the Swisslog Healthcare Solutions Europe senior management team from the start. Huthwaite ensured they were truly involved by consulting with them to help create the customised training materials. This included the development of roleplay scenarios that mirrored typical sales situations in a business environment.

Alan Le Roy, Huthwaite's account manager for the project explains: *"This initial planning and consultation was a critical factor to its success. Working closely with Swisslog Healthcare Solutions Europe's HR business partner, AnnaCarin Wardh, we consulted with the key players on the challenges faced by the sales teams. This was the basis to determine how the training had to be tailored to achieve the best solution. This was also important in terms of getting buy-in and active support for the training."*

"Our sales cycle can be long and complex; up to two to three years for example, and ideal for the

SPIN® approach," says Zagnoni. *"We liked the focus on building relationships, communicating the benefits of change and ensuring that customers understood the long-term value to their organisation. The SPIN® approach was ideal to further develop our ability to identify and create value by working with the customer to reach the tailored solution."*

Swisslog took the SPIN® Selling Skills – blended learning approach, which ensured maximum skills transfer and minimum time off the job. This consisted of a mix of face-to-face learning and e-learning. This training is currently being complemented by coaching from managers and a series of webinars as part of a reinforcement programme.

"The blended nature of the training programme has been important" he adds. *"The online learning covered the theory effectively and efficiently, providing time for role playing and interactive work during the face-to-face sessions. This was vital for gaining practical knowledge; for example, how to act/behave in meeting with a potential client using the SPIN® technique and approach."*

Although the full results of Swisslog's investment in training will be seen in the long-term, according to the management team the SPIN® approach has stimulated the ability of the sales teams in many ways: to

better identify customer needs and highlight the benefits our solutions can provide, to be more results-driven and to think more strategically in their approach.

In turn, Le Roy believes that Zagnoni's enthusiasm and motivation played its own role: *"His drive to embed the learning through coaching, webinars and other activities has added to the momentum in changing behaviour,"* he says.

And what about the sales people themselves? Feedback has been extremely positive. Typical comments include: *"I now know how important it is to investigate the Implied Needs more and to look for explicit customer statements", "I now recognise the need to ask questions more and not to offer solutions too early" and "I am changing my frame of mind and becoming more focused on identifying solution benefits than describing products."*

Zagnoni concludes: *"There has been a major shift from thinking mainly about the features of a solution to thinking about the Benefits to the customer. Personally, I have taken a number of sales and marketing courses during my career, but never SPIN® Selling Skills. Its emphasis on asking questions and ensuring clarity is ideal for our business. I believe we will be reaping the rewards for years to come."*



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