

# IMS Health – consistent, exceptional service across Europe

**W**hen a company relies on a network of national Service Teams to provide Europe-wide service, it is vital that they use a mode of communication that is appropriate to their market, consistent with their Sales Teams, and helps them effectively realise business opportunities. IMS Health discovered the benefits of combining local expertise with consistency when Huthwaite were retained to deliver a pan-European solution to their needs.

IMS Health provides market intelligence for major global pharmaceutical and biotech companies, delivering the insights they need to make decisions and shape strategies. In an increasingly competitive multi-national marketplace, it is their ability to meet the changing needs of clients that has kept IMS at the forefront of their sector:

Traditionally in IMS Health the role of the Client Service Teams has been to deliver the solutions that the Sales Teams sell to clients. As Ruth Evans, VP Client Services Europe, points out, "Although Service is a separate group from Sales, we need to be seamless and integrated in our approach with sales to ensure optimal customer satisfaction. From consultation through to Client Services, we have a portfolio of products and services that are aligned to our clients' business processes, whether they are looking to manage sales forces, manage brands, build a product portfolio, launch a new product

or expand their territory. The Service Teams provide everything that the Sales Teams sell, and it is one of our responsibilities to maintain and grow that business."

The concept of developing the commercial awareness and relationship building skills of Client Services was first highlighted when IMS asked Huthwaite to help them improve the sales and negotiation skills of the Sales Teams. Following the success of this solution, IMS saw the opportunity to extend the initiative to those involved in customer interaction. Ruth saw this as essential if IMS was to move forward, "The Service Teams needed to have a clearer commercial focus. Competition is growing, and our clients are now looking to IMS for more of a partnership approach."

However, changing behaviour, and the development of the skills associated with delivering this change across such a diverse spectrum of employees and markets, posed a significant challenge. To achieve productive, sustainable results demanded a consistent, European-wide approach that would ensure buy-in through consultation. Huthwaite's European network of behaviour experts, combined with their unique ability to add measurable value to all customer touch points at all levels, helped provide effective solutions to a series of quite distinct national business centres.

The initial phase of the project involved a detailed audit of current cultures and customer interactions within the Service Teams to define roles and identify potential business opportunities. Annalize Cuthill of Huthwaite UK explains the process of discovery: "We spent significant time on the floor of service centres observing – listening to phone calls and monitoring emails. There were also face-to-face interviews to establish how members of the Client Service Teams saw their roles, and to assess current skills levels. We wanted to explore the dynamics of a client interaction, its purpose, how outcomes were measured and what client services were doing to influence the outcomes." Key issues were fed back to the managers for their input, and from here a classroom event was developed to enable skill transfer and a safe practise opportunity.

In April last year, Huthwaite invited all six IMS Country Service Managers together for three days in Madrid to showcase the proposed classroom event and share some of the key modules and skills with them. This pilot provided valuable feedback on how the modules would operate across the countries, and gave the managers first hand experience of what their teams would be involved in.

The resultant three-day Client Support Development Workshop was designed to deliver the necessary skills required to improve

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Customer Service Teams' commercialism and communication skills. It was rolled out early 2004 – right across the key European markets.

The bespoke workshop consisted of six key modules including developing needs, opportunity spotting, customer care, handling complaints, telephone skills and writing business emails. Each participant completed an Individual Development Plan prior to attending the workshop to identify areas they felt they needed to improve upon, which ensured that individuals got the maximum benefit from the workshop. Integral to the solution was post-workshop reinforcement, which included creating individual KPIs as part of individual's appraisals going forward, and a self-teach coaching programme to provide managers with a framework to support and nurture the integration of their staff's new skills.

Ruth is delighted both with how the programme has evolved and its outcome, "Huthwaite is always open to discussion. They listened carefully to our needs, and worked hard to achieve total consensus – top to bottom. Everyone knows why these changes are important for IMS, and how this strategy for the Service Teams fits into these changes." Ruth was particularly impressed with the dedication of Huthwaite's locally-based behavioural experts, "They spent their own time getting to know the



teams in each country, and I am sure that helped make the workshop effective and specific to what are quite different team dynamics."

All 140 people have now completed the Client Support Development Workshop and IMS Health Service Teams across Europe are motivated to help grow the business. Now,

not only does their client interaction dovetail precisely into the mode of communication used by their Sales Teams, but they now possess a range of skills and abilities that help them deliver commercial improvements through their own exceptional levels of service.