

SKF Europe look to solution selling with Huthwaite

A client success story



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The word 'solution' is one that is bandied about endlessly in modern business, but the fact remains that no product, regardless of its quality, will sell unless it resolves a basic consumer need. SKF, an established leader and innovator in bearing technology, is just one business to have addressed the importance of identifying customer value as the key to successful selling. Indeed, the need to offer a more complete package to provide this was the principal driver behind the decision to change the direction of its sales focus.

Ingrid Truys, Quality and Human Resources Manager - Service Division, West-Europe, explains: "With the launch of a new concept, solution sales, exemplified by the SKF Total Shaft Solutions™, our salespeople found themselves in a challenging position: where before they were responsible for selling a single product, they were now being asked to approach the customer in an entirely different way in order to sell a more complete package. We looked at a number of ways to bridge this skills gap, before deciding to contact Huthwaite for assistance."

Huthwaite worked alongside SKF to gain a sense of exactly what it was trying to achieve and to identify and address specific concerns - the result of which was the creation of a dedicated training programme, designed to impact directly on SKF's

salesforce. The programme itself was meticulously planned and resulted in an entirely unique hybrid of Huthwaite's methodology.

The training took the form of two phases over a period of six weeks, during which time a mix of Huthwaite models were employed - these included SPIN® Selling,, Account Strategy for Major Sales and Teamworking skills. After an initial pilot programme in Holland, it was decided that a range of SKF staff would take part in the training programme - including Area Managing Directors, Sales Unit Managers and Service Managers - so as to integrate the training concepts fully into a cohesive sales strategy.

Ingrid Truys commented: "What made the training so effective was that the message it delivered was reinforced during and in-between the two phases by directly applying the Huthwaite methodology to real-life cases. Additionally, the ability to maintain local ownership of each programme was a real plus point for us because of the fact that it was designed to be implemented over a diverse range of countries. The training was rolled out in, amongst other territories, Italy, France, Spain and Portugal, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden - and because the project Huthwaite developed was so flexible, we were able to adapt it locally to address specific areas of concern. For example, if one of our units was more in

need of an emphasis on SPIN® Selling than another, the programme was flexible enough to allow us to take this into account and place extra SPIN® Selling emphasis where it was required."

As with any new information, the primary hurdle to overcome was the initial adaptation and absorption of a new methodology - Huthwaite Consultant Tony Willshire, who oversaw the training, explains: "Once this obstacle had been successfully cleared, the response we had was extremely good. The fact that the training was directly applicable made the transition from the training room to the workplace a more comfortable one, which I feel made a real difference."

"The overall result", Ingrid continues, "was that we were able to ease our salesforce into changing certain fundamentals of our sales philosophy - and after decades of supplying bearings, maintenance tools and so on, as a product, we are now in a position to fully provide what we see as a tailor made solution for any individual machine or application."

"We see the training as a key part of our commitment to developing our customer relations, and really feel that it has added value to the transactional process. As such, we are looking very closely at the possibility of continuing our relationship with Huthwaite - and plans are already afoot to roll the programme out even further in the New Year".

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