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whitewater group

ACCELERATING BUSINESS PERFORMANCE BY EMPOWERING PEOPLE

Case Study: Enterprise Storage Supplier – Re-engineering Sales

The Challenge

Now a leading supplier of storage systems for enterprise customers, the client's growth was initially fueled by the dotcom explosion. As the business environment changed, the client needed to shift their business efforts to a much larger market – enterprise storage. With the enormous explosion of data in the enterprise, storage had become a high percentage of every CIO's IT budget and a very strategic, executive level decision. The business environment for enterprise selling is much more complex requiring different business needs of the customers and a higher level of skill sets of the sales and marketing organization.

The skill sets of the sales force needed to be elevated in order to manage high level, complex sales campaigns. A common language and process between sales and marketing needed to be integrated in order to provide better ways for the groups to work together in mutual creation of customer value. For instance, the marketing programs needed to move from a product-focused orientation to a solution-focus with an approach that supported the ROI argument for determining the economic value of a customer's purchase decision at the executive, management, and operation levels.

The Solution

Develop and implement a series of programs designed to align the sales, marketing, and product development organizations into a more value-based, solutions oriented go-to-market strategy. Train over 100 sales managers, including all senior executives, product marketing managers, corporate marketing managers, and engineers.

Over the course of the engagement, the team focused on the 4 key areas for sales process implementation success – Executive Engagement, Marketing Support, Sales Management Coaching and Leadership, and Sales Team Practices.

Engaged the entire sales team in a working sessions that provides participants with sales strategies for managing high value, complex sales campaigns. Participants learned how to select the right sales strategy based on their solution advantage and competitive position in the account. Without the understanding of how and when to pursue an opportunity, as well as when not to pursue an opportunity, sales people could lose that one chance at presenting the value of their solution to a potential customer.

To reinforce marketing's support of the process, the entire marketing team in a marketing- focused workshop. Prior to this implementation, marketing was not clearly and consistently articulating the linkage between the business and financial impact of the company's solution and the customer's current business concerns and priorities. Today, the output of marketing directly supports the kind of information and value propositions needed to support the new selling practices.

The active involvement of executives is in the critical path for sales process implementation success. Executive Overviews of the new selling process were conducted with the executive staff over the course of several sessions. A member of the executive staff flew out to kick off every session in which the sales force was learning the new process. Today, when a sales team invites a member of the executive staff to participate in a sales campaign, there exists a common process, plan, and language leveraged to optimize the executive's impact in the account.

Without the aggressive and active involvement of first-line field management, no sales process will be long-lived. Each and every field manager participated in a 2-day Field Management program, where each learned both how to coach the new selling and planning practices, and how to embed the process in their day-to-day activities.

The Result

With the new selling process in place and supported, the client has transformed their customer base to 75% enterprise, during the worst technology spending downturn in recent memory. At the same time, revenues have remained remarkably stable, unlike the severe downturn experienced by many of the company's competitors.

They increased their close rate from 60% to 85%. Significant improvements were made between the synergies and relationships of the sales, marketing, product development, and engineering organizations.

What started out as a training program significantly impacted the thinking of the entire company to a solution-focused approach.