

case study

Online resource drives sales orientation

ProQuest Information & Learning is a premier provider of newspapers, periodicals, literature, dissertations, reference and archival information to educational institutions, libraries and businesses around the world. They collect, index, abstract, supplement and aggregate content to create innovative products and services. They have been working with publishers for more than 60 years to help them reach the widest possible market for their publications.

The problem

The question we were asked by the sales and marketing director, Simon Beale, was, "How can we develop a greater sales orientation in the team?"

The typical sales person is highly intelligent and educated. They join the team because they like to travel, have good language skills and enjoy working in the academic environment. They do not typically join because they anticipate a career in sales.

Selling at ProQuest requires both an understanding of complex technical products and the ability to work through complex committee-based decision making processes.

The objectives

The project team identified the following objectives:

- Create a consistent approach to selling and a programme to develop the appropriate sales skills
- Create a single library of information about products and customers
- Create a forum for reps to share their knowledge and experience
- Provide an induction programme for new reps
- Monitor and measure usage

The solution

The solution was christened InfoQuest. It is a complete knowledge bank of all ProQuest's information about products and services and about their markets, customers and competitors. All of this sits alongside a series of programmed learning activities designed to encourage sales people to focus not only on acquiring the knowledge they need but also to think through the way they approach their customers and their products.

“ Technically it's good, it's solid, there are no waiting times, it's quick and easy to navigate, there are no plug-ins, no heavy screens – all really important when you are in a hotel room! ”

Carlos Mascorda, ProQuest Spain

The results

InfoQuest has been taken up by ProQuest offices around the world and the response has been universally positive:

"I think this is a brilliant initiative which will help in smoothing out the learning curve for all our new recruits, along with keeping sales staff updated, informed and on top of our product knowledge."

"I found InfoQuest extremely useful and informative, even after working with ProQuest for over a year! I particularly found the sections useful on the distributors and our relationships with them."

"This is our feedback from the Japan office. Overall impression of Nelson Croom is impressive. We really think this is a great project."

"I think this would be an invaluable resource for a new starter to learn more about ProQuest as a company and its values and objectives. It would also be a really good tool for an existing member of staff to refer to."

Next steps

Work has continued ever since launch and the ProQuest team are now using the Imago Builder tool to take control of development themselves.

