

## case study

## Hodder Education sales channels invaded by Vikings

Nelson Croom has been working with Hodder Education for several years, developing an online community where sales people can learn about new products, think through their approach to selling them and discuss any issues or obstacles they encounter with their colleagues.

In May 2005, Hodder Education turned their attention to the skills of the sales people and asked Nelson Croom to help them to devise a solution that would work for sales and marketing teams focused on a range of marketplaces: three regional schools teams, a tertiary team, a consumer/trade team and an export team.

**The problem**

The sales people in the different teams have very different roles. For a common approach to developing skills to work, it would have to have a strong set of core principles that would be applicable in the different channels.

The picture was further complicated by the fact that each of the markets were changing in ways that had a significant impact on the management of the channel and therefore on the role of the sales person.

**Schools:** Teachers were increasingly expected to make decisions about purchases of ICT materials and they needed more help.

**Trade:** With the growth of central buying, Hodder sales people needed to become trusted advisors, helping with sell through of centrally agreed promotions, and agreeing local initiatives and range.

**Tertiary:** Changes in publishing were taking the tertiary sales team into the universities, where competitors had larger teams and greater economies of scale.

**Marketing:** The changes affecting the sales teams were also creating a need for a fully integrated approach to sales and marketing.

**The solution**

The project team selected a suite of three courses from Nelson Croom's Publishing Portfolio – *Principles of Consultative Selling*, *Conversations with Customers* and *Advancing the Sale* – because of their focus on a clear sales process that could be applied to the work of each sales team.

Nelson Croom then created versions of the three courses for each sales team, working with the relevant sales managers to tailor the material to meet the specific needs of their team.

“ I realised at the time that dressing up as a Viking for our sales conference might be a mistake and now that Alan has pictures I feel I should say how pleased I am with everything they have done for us. Everything that is good at Hodder Education has come from Nelson Croom – now can I have the negatives? ”

Philip Walters, Managing

As well as this detailed focus on content Hodder helped Nelson Croom to bring the material to life by providing photographs of Hodder staff.

The Hodder Education project team chose the name Sales Warriors. Cartoon Vikings appeared throughout the courses highlighting key concepts and approaches. Sales warriors became the theme for the sales conference with everyone dressing up as Vikings for the launch.

Nelson Croom developed a new course called *Consultative Sales Skills for Marketers* which worked through the role of the marketing person at each

stage of the decision making process, focusing specifically on the way responsibility for the sale moves backwards and forwards between sales and marketing.

All the courses were blended with face to face workshops to create a rich and engaging learning experience designed to change behaviours and ultimately drive sales growth.

**The results**

The programme of learning has resulted in significant changes in behaviour. Sales people report back that they are using the approach in the marketplace and it is being noticed by customers who have started to see them as trusted advisors. Nelson Croom is now working with the Hodder consumer and export sales managers to develop a new course, *Account and Territory Management*. This is designed to extend the application of the model and to explore the changing role of these sales teams. It launches in October 2006.

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