

## Sweet & Maxwell sales academy achieves greater than 180% return on investment

### the challenge

how to move from being a traditional provider of 'print' products to selling 'on-line' information solutions

Part of the Thomson Corporation (now Thomson Reuters) since 1987, Sweet & Maxwell has its head quarters in London and employs 900 people.

With over 300 years of history and heritage in legal publishing, Sweet & Maxwell offers detailed and specialist knowledge, understanding, interpretation and commentary across a wide range of subjects. These publications use a variety of formats to meet their customers' needs including books, journals, periodicals, loose leafs, CD-ROMs and on line services.

Operating in a traditional market, Sweet & Maxwell's challenge was two-fold:

- to convince users of the benefits of 'online' information sources over the preferred print-based resources
- to position Sweet & Maxwell as THE

**“We required a fundamental shift in our business model”**

provider of online information in the market

The stimulus for the project was a drive

for organic growth, with a specific emphasis on increasing new business to 20% of turnover. Sweet & Maxwell realised that this would require a fundamental shift in their business model and, as a result, they would need to:

- redefine their market proposition
- shift the sales culture from a 'prescriptive, reactionary' sales approach to a 'proactive, consultative' approach
- harmonise the disparate sales approaches and methodologies in existence as a result of historical acquisition

### the choice

more than the standard 'off-the-shelf' training package

Appreciating the scale of the challenge, Sweet & Maxwell actively sought an external training partner who could provide more than a standard 'off-the-shelf' training package. Critical to the success of the initiative, was the selected partner's ability to define the required sales approach, evaluate the sales force against the defined approach and develop and deliver a suite of training programmes designed to upgrade the skills and behaviours of the sales force appropriately. The partner they chose was Forty2.

“It was Forty2's thorough and methodical diagnostic approach that

**“Forty2 used a diagnostic process that helped us fully understand the problem”**

attracted us to them”, says Sales Director Kim Massana. “Unlike other providers, who turned up with the solution before they understood the problem, Forty2 used a diagnostic

process that helped us fully understand our issues before prescribing an appropriate solution. In many ways their approach emulated the style we wanted our salespeople to adopt.”



## the solution

### the 'Sweet & Maxwell' way

After several months of analysis, which included direct observation of sales performance during clients visits, interviewing customers, gathering information from all areas of the business and running workshops to help define the desired approach, Forty2 had sufficient data to develop the curriculum to support the transition the sales force had to make.

The result was the Sweet & Maxwell Sales Academy. The Academy comprises totally integrated suites of

training modules designed to provide skills and behavioural transformation at

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4 levels 1) basic sales skills, 2) handling difficult and demanding sales situations, 3) Complex Selling and

Major Account Management, 4) Sales Leadership. Later an additional level was added, aimed at developing the skills and behaviours of Account Handlers and Telephone Sales teams.

Prior to the launch of The Sales Academy, all Sales Managers were fully trained in the 'Forty2 Coaching Process' designed to support the participants as they are trained and to ensure principles covered are embedded.

## the results

### +181% return on investment

Three months after completion of an Academy training programme, every participant is required to formally present to senior management evidence of the impact of the Academy programme on their sales performance. “The evidence clearly indicates that the programmes have had a significant impact on individual sales performance and that our sales force is shifting from the old product-based sales approach to the new consultative-approach required to sell on-line solutions”, says Cindy Davies, Sweet & Maxwell's Training and Development Manager. While the anecdotal evidence is compelling, Sweet & Maxwell went one

step further and developed a rigorous process designed to quantify the impact of the initiative and measure return on investment. The process involved participants identifying their top ten

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sales during the year following completion of their training, quantifying the percentage contribution of the

Academy training to each sale, calculating all direct and indirect costs associated with the delivery of the programme and determining over all return on investment. Cindy Davies explains: “The approach we used was robust enough to satisfy our Group Finance Director. We factored in all costs associated with the Academy and reduced the reported sales results by 75% to allow for over-confidence, and still the Sales Academy provided a 181% return on investment after only one year. A fantastic result!”.

