

Diagnosis for success

In 2007 Roche Applied Science generated tremendous interest among the research community worldwide with the launch of its ultra-fast genome sequencing technology. By following Miller Heiman principles, the company's German subsidiary quickly capitalised on these sales opportunities, successfully capturing around ten per cent of the world market in less than two years. This approach enabled Roche's sales team to focus on best-fit customers and understand the economic as well as technical issues driving decision makers.

Roche Diagnostics, which accounts for about a third of Roche's overall annual turnover, develops a range of innovative tests and systems for detecting, screening and monitoring disease. Its Applied Science division supplies these products - which include instruments, highly specific reagents and test kits - to the diverse research market.

The company is especially strong in genomics and at the beginning of 2007 introduced the ultra-high throughput Genome Sequencer FLX System.

"The system is very flexible in terms of the number and type of applications it can address," explains Dr Volker Strack, Key Account Manager for Sequencing at Roche Diagnostics GmbH in Mannheim. "It delivers the most comprehensive result at a low total cost, giving the best overall value of any next-generation sequencing Technology."

"Because the sequencer meets the needs of researchers across many different disciplines, within a short space of time we had received enquiries for information from many high-ranking research organisations all over Germany."

Interest came from the company's existing customer base, which includes biotechnology companies, university faculties and medical research charities. The product was also opening many new doors for Roche.

"In Europe a typical sales cycle for this system is over one year and it is very labour intensive. The challenge we faced was how to explore these opportunities without overstretching our resources."

To ensure the new technology was introduced into the scientific market

as efficiently as possible, Roche Applied Science management decided to adopt the Miller Heiman's Sales System®. Members of the sales and marketing team attended workshops on *Strategic Selling*®, *Conceptual Selling*® and *LAMP*®, together with *Executive Impact*SM and *Negotiate Success*SM.

Prioritising Business Opportunities

Dr Strack, who was recruited for his knowledge of the genome sequencing market, already had experience of Miller Heiman's practical and pragmatic sales approach.

"We needed to identify and focus on the organisations that were actually in a position to go ahead with a high level of capital expenditure. Using the Miller Heiman methodology we could quickly assess the sales opportunities with the greatest potential for the sequencer. In the case of new customers, we were also able to map out what other needs we could fulfil."

To select best-fit customers Roche used the *Funnel ScoreCard*®. This provides the factual information needed to allocate time and resources effectively. By applying and rating key criteria - such as budget availability and the quality of the relationship - the team is able to track the value it gets from customers at each stage, from first contact to closure.

While channelling people's energies in the right direction, *Strategic Selling*® has also brought them closer together.

“Previously the sales approach relied on sales representatives and regional managers communicating with each other. Now with a common process and language, it’s much easier for everyone to have regular discussions and progress sales situations more quickly,” commented Dr Strack.

[By following the best practice methods the team has improved win ratios and made the sales funnel more productive.](#)

Closer to Senior Decision Makers

The team is also better equipped to gain access to and influence top-level executives. In particular, key account managers have developed a deeper understanding of who is involved in the decision-making process and how to move technically-based sales onto a more economic footing.

Said Dr Strack: “Typically we talk to the laboratory staff, departmental heads and chief scientific officers but we also need to have discussions with finance and purchasing. [Strategic Selling® has instilled the importance of expanding our contacts and not always talking to the same people.](#)”

“We’ve also learnt to develop a relationship with a good coach and to think about what’s driving specific decision makers. Your product can have twenty different features and benefits, but nineteen of them may be of no interest or relevance to a particular individual.”

“Working through the Blue Sheet analysis makes us identify all the key contacts, both technical and economic, and try to assess their personal outcomes. As a result we know where we stand with them and what we still need to do to win.”

Attending the *Executive ImpactsSM* workshop provided the team with further insight into how personality affects decision making. This focused on identifying the different types of senior-level decision makers and developing the most appropriate persuasion strategies.

Successful Negotiators

Blue Sheet reviews are carried out regularly, and information on specific situations and customers is added to Roche’s Customer Relationship Management system.

Illustrating the impact of these reviews, Dr Strack recalls sitting down with Miller Heiman coach, Gerhard Münstermann to map out the next steps in a number of live projects.

“I took a break from the meeting and rang the customers there and then, asking the questions we’d discussed. It was daunting and very exciting at the same time, but I moved negotiations along in several situations and in one case closed the deal because the client decided to go with our technology. Equally it can be good to know that’s where the story ends, so you can move on.”

Miller Heiman has also run workshops to help the team strengthen customer relationships and achieve better deals. *Negotiate SuccessSM* sets out a step-by-step method for resisting price pressure and selling on value. It advocates collaborating with customers as the key to finding common ground and reaching a mutually acceptable deal as well as building trust for the future.

Roche’s Sequencing Dept. now has proven practices for creating and managing its business opportunities and relationships. Implementation of Miller Heiman focused the team on winnable situations, improved contact with senior-level decision makers in key accounts and established criteria for what goes into the sales funnel. [Beyond the processes themselves, Dr Strack appreciates the role of the Miller Heiman coach, acknowledging that someone who understands the hurdles and challenges you face can make all the difference.](#)

Based on this positive experience, Roche is piloting Miller Heiman’s methodology in a number of other product areas.