

“Time and again our AEs attended these [strategic account management] classes with other stakeholders within the company and came away with high-quality strategies for bringing greater value to our clients. Time and again we saw measurable and anecdotal evidence that using the plans created in these classes allowed us greater access to decision makers and to deeper information from our clients. In fact they started treating us like partners!”

—Bill Baron, Vice President, Sales Education

THE SITUATION

SunGard Availability Services, a \$2 billion unit of SunGard, Inc., provides business continuity services that enable information-dependent companies to keep their networks and systems up and running. SunGard’s industry was turned upside down following the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, and the resulting disruption to businesses. Customer demand spiked, as did competition. Many aggressive and well-equipped competitors (such as IBM and Hewlett Packard) suddenly entered the market. SunGard had to find, keep, and grow its customers differently, especially among strategic accounts, its most profitable segment.

Though the CEO and Board of Directors expected the sales organization to rapidly respond to these market threats, several obstacles prevented the sales organization from meeting these challenges:

- SunGard’s legacy of slow growth through acquisition and relatively low competition
- Widely different methods and practices with very little sharing of best practices
- Internal groups providing inconsistent sales support and remaining in their functional silos
- A lack of customer-focused innovation
- A general tendency to react to sales opportunities rather than proactively develop targeted accounts

THE SOLUTION

The AchieveForum Corporation worked with SunGard’s strategic accounts group to help it redesign its processes and methods. AchieveForum then developed and delivered training solutions that introduced the new approach to managing strategic accounts and equipped account teams with the skills and tools to implement it. This transformation focused on the following areas:

From Legacy SunGard: Slower-Moving, Everyone Does Their Own Thing	To 21st Century SunGard: Customer-Focused, Team-Based, Agile
Select accounts are based on past revenue	Select accounts are based on future revenue and fit with SunGard’s value proposition
Team leaders request and direct resources as desired	Core account teams are formed and plan together
Team leaders and resources communicate virtually	Teams meet and plan face-to-face annually
Focus is on pursuit of active opportunities	Focus is on pursuit and developing broader and deeper account relationships
Team leaders and regional VPs use their own planning tools and methods	Team leaders and regional VPs use standardized account planning tools and process
Account reviews are conducted when and as team leaders choose	Account reviews adhere to a standardized approach and the EVP of Sales participates in all reviews
Account teams are on their own	A national SAM support team of high-caliber sales professionals is on call to assist account teams



Account team leaders now implement consistent practices and tools across the organization and use context-specific coaching skills to reinforce and coach their people in the new selling skills and tools. Also, executives model the skills and support account teams in proposal presentations for new business and in existing customer business reviews.

THE IMPACT

SunGard account managers now participate in meetings with higher-level customer leaders who share proprietary intelligence about their business strategy. As a result of better access to senior customers, better preparation, and improved selling skills, account managers develop higher-value customer solutions rather than simply renew contracts.

Customer negotiations now yield higher average selling price, larger average deal size, improved profit, and more satisfied customers. Contract renewals and new win rates are both up in the full year following implementation. The following sample successes illustrate how the account team:

- Beat IBM head to head in a new account in which IBM-paid staff were already working at the customer site; this was accomplished by thoroughly understanding the customer's business needs and risks and creating a customized, innovative solution
- Renewed and extended a multi-year service contract and added consulting services for a well-known global pharmaceutical firm based on more deeply understanding its business and technology strategy
- Renewed and significantly upgraded the value of the services contract with one of the largest U.S. health insurers by deeply understanding the customer's emerging data security needs, which were driven by significant changes in the industry



About AchieveForum:

AchieveForum delivers leadership solutions that are designed for the customer and are built on more than 85 years of global experience. For more information, go to:

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