



Nick Applegarth

# Sales Life

from **SolutionsforSales**

Our regular feature 'Sales Life' invites senior salespeople to give their views on key sales issues.

This quarter we talk to Nick Applegarth, Senior Vice President EMEA, Envox.

### **What is your job title and what do you do?**

I am Senior Vice President EMEA for Envox, responsible for all the commercial activities of Envox in EMEA. Prior to ENVOX I was EMEA VP with Nuance for 4 years and prior to that I was with Octel for 7 years (Octel was acquired by Lucent Technologies), latterly as Vice President, Service Provider Messaging Sales.

### **What is the top sales challenge you and your team are currently facing?**

Recruitment. It often looks like the easiest thing to do is hire an experienced sales person from within our sector, who may be from one of our competitors. This can be a short-sighted approach and limits the exchange of new ideas and approaches that could be gained from a more flexible outlook. Such 'in-breeding' limits the talent pool, as well as creating confidentiality issues and must be quite boring for customers who see the same faces but with different business cards. The answer is to invest in talent, which may be from an adjacent industry sector. To do this effectively means having the right support infrastructure in place covering training, coaching/mentoring and a willingness to accept that it may take a little longer to get the new hire up to speed.

### **What is the best piece of sales advice you've ever been given?**

Always ask the question, 'what do we have to do to win the deal?' Sometimes you can ask it as stated, other times you have to find subtle alternatives. A prospect that does not or cannot tell you is probably backing another competitor or may not be a key influencer or decision maker.

### **Describe a memorable deal**

Winning a £5m deal in the old Soviet Union for Dowty Case, its largest ever deal. We made the initial contact at a trade fair in Moscow, winning their desire to learn more by letting them tell us what they wanted. This led to us mounting a major sales campaign. The campaign required us to win the support of the UK and Russian Governments, find the

common thread of interest for 10 different decision making groups spread over 10 different cities in Russia and visit locations that were, until our visit, off limits to foreigners, (we took our own food with us whenever we could!). The coup de grace was resisting pressure from my boss to give them the 15% discount they asked for at the closing meeting, we still won the deal.

### **What is the most important thing to learn about your industry?**

To realise that competition is not just other companies with a similar solution. There is more than one-way to solve a business problem and just because you think that your approach to solving it is the most elegant it may well be that there are other more compelling ways.

### **Who in your industry do you most admire?**

Bob Cohn, the founder of Octel. He had the ability to identify a good business opportunity, realise that he could not do everything to chase it and that hiring great people made it easier for him to do more.

### **What is the best time of day for a meeting?**

Towards the end of the day when you can sit with your colleagues unpressurised by work-day events and discuss what's gone well or not! Preferably over a pint.

With customers; whenever they'll let you, and before the majority of your competitors – either as the first or second through the door. This gives you an excellent opportunity to set the agenda and lay some landmines.

### **Which do you think is most important when winning new business; technical expertise or sales skills?**

A good salesperson with just enough technical skill to keep the sale going. Technical experts tend to lose sight of the need to address the client's business issues or where they are in the sales cycle.

*This interview was conducted in late 2007 while Nick was still in the above role. Nick has since left Envox.*