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# Pinewood Shepperton Studios Focuses on Performance Improvement Following Merger

## case study

Pinewood and Shepperton Studios are two famous British film studios whose rivalry stretches back over many years. Following their merger in 2001, it was not surprising that both sales teams found it difficult to quickly adapt to a situation which now saw them joined as one. But using a Strategic Sales training course from Gazing Performance Ltd, Nick Smith, the Sales and Marketing Director was able to accelerate the integration process and **create a cohesive team more quickly.**

One of the most difficult management tasks to carry out following a merger of two companies is to persuade both sales departments - who had previously competed aggressively against each other - to now work together as one team. Human nature and ingrained corporate cultures make it an uphill struggle to drop pre-conceived notions about 'the other side'. Yet for the merger to work, the integration process of both teams must happen quickly.

That was the problem facing Nick Smith, the Sales and Marketing Director at Pinewood Shepperton Studios, a new company that represented a merger between two of the UK's biggest - and most venerable - film studios, and which now required both sales and marketing teams to combine forces.

Both studios have long histories and continue to be closely associated with the British film making industry. Pinewood Studios, in particular, is known the world over for providing the film sets for the James Bond films. The Studios are not just used by film makers, but by TV production houses, advertising agencies and corporate video makers too, whilst the 200 acre sites are also home to a multitude of tenants, supporting the Studios.

In this way, the Studios represent film-making 'eco-systems' that must compete on a global basis with other film-making complexes.

A management team, backed by venture capitalists and chaired by Sir Michael Grade, recognised Pinewood's latent potential when they acquired it from the Rank organisation three years ago and, two years later, merged it with Shepperton Studios, which, until then, had operated independently.

Following the merger, and the subsequent consolidation of the many organisational functions, Nick recognised that getting the sales teams to **"all point in the same direction"** was going to represent a challenge and that he would need to enlist the help of a specialist sales training company to help him achieve it. Nick knew from his previous jobs with Beenz.com and Nokia, that an outside training company could help him achieve his goals more quickly as they could provide the all important objectivity and neutrality of views and support creating a common platform from which to improve performance in a range of areas.

Gazing Performance recommended to Nick a heavily customised version of its Strategic Sales Model that would see ten staff (drawn from both sales teams) working together over a five day period in an intensive learning environment. This programme would help the team to improve their individual sales performance and of the team as a whole.

Central to the course was providing all the delegates with a map-based, one page Sales Model that helps them navigate their way through



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a sales cycle and help them to better understand the mental stages or phases that a buyer goes through.

By having an improved understanding of this, the sales force are then able to know which motivational strategies will be the most effective to use.

Of no less importance to providing improved technical skills, Gazing Performance's approach was also based on helping the teams to better 'align' themselves with the goals of the new business and to be more receptive to the new processes and procedures that Nick was implementing.

Measuring the success of the training course, then, would be largely based on whether the two teams had successfully come together as one and whether there had been a shift in attitude; specifically from a passive, "order-taking" attitude towards a more pro-active one.

Nick also admitted to having some pre-conceived ideas about measurement. He said, "At the end of the day, I simply wanted Gazing to get us to a

point where everyone got over the same hurdles. Ultimately, this was achieved".

Gazing Performance's own course measurement systems bore this out. The immediate feedback from the delegates attending the course was overwhelmingly positive, whilst, subsequently, recall levels remained high. However, the all important measure of the course's success was whether there had been any changes in attitude and behaviour. Again, this was the case.

As Nick puts it, "We noticed that people were much slicker in the way they performed and were more confident about what they needed to do in 'customer interactions' for the outcome to support meeting their team and company targets.

Nick, however, is aware that the training course should not be perceived as a one off. As he says, "the parameters of our business are constantly changing, so there has to be continuous support for the sales teams. Further training will play a significant part in this support. As I see it, we have progressed down the path, but we are not at the end of the path and have already committed to more training and development with Gazing".

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