



“Actionable” Competitive Intelligence Helps Sales Reps Close Deals

Helping sales reps to anticipate and counter competitive threats, as well as to give them the knowledge, tools and resources necessary to close deals is essential in order to increase win-rates, particularly in competitive sales situations.

The Competitive Engagement Center (aka “war room”) at Sun Microsystems is a resource broker that provides issue resolution and deal support for Sun’s global large accounts. Many of Sun’s sales reps were coming to the war room with the same, recurring questions about competitive issues and the war room needed a fast and repeatable way to address these basic questions in order to help with other, more complex deals. There were also general territory sales reps who didn’t use the war room but needed to get up to speed quickly on competitive issues. The challenge for Sun was to scale the experiences gained from the war room to the broader sales force.

To solve this problem, Sun’s corporate competitive team worked with groups across the company to transform competitive information into “actionable intelligence.” They focused on equipping the sales force with tools that were concise and prescriptive, as they understood that sales reps have neither the time nor the patience to sift through piles of data unless it directly impacts their ability to close a deal quickly. Led by Cindee Mock and Nancy Weintraub, the competitive team worked with Kevin Imm, former team leader of the war room, to supplement the field with proven sales strategies and resources that would allow reps to focus on *selling*, not on researching competitive information. Together they captured and shared select reps’ winning sales strategies more broadly so that other sales reps could benefit from these successes.

“The competitive team developed resources, like sales alerts that gave the field a ‘heads up’ on competitive actions as well as Gameplanners that outlined competitive sales scenarios. This got reps started with a solid foundation and freed up my team to work with other sales teams and to take on a greater volume of deals,” said Imm. “When I started with the war room, we touched around \$400 to \$600 million of deals. With the ongoing help of the competitive team, we were able to increase throughput 3-4X (touching approx. \$2.8B in deals) and increased the absolute rate of business we were able to close. And that was without an increase in staffing.”

By equipping Sun’s sales force with proven competitive tactics and tools, the corporate competitive team enabled Sun sales reps to save time, increase the quality of the story and fully focus on serving the needs of their customers.