

CASE STUDY

WINTON GLOBAL HOMES 2009

Winton Global is a manufacturer of pre-fabricated home and cottage packages as well as engineered wood products (roof trusses, floor systems and wall panels). Winton Global is based in Prince George and has been in business for over thirty years (previously under the name of Spruce Capital Homes).

In the Fall of 2008, two employees of Winton Global attended a seminar entitled “Recession Proof Marketing”, which was sponsored by the Business Innovation Partnership (BIP) and conducted by Neil Godin. As a result of this seminar they identified gaps in their marketing approach, particularly in the areas of positioning and customer service. They enlisted the help of Neil Godin to work on these areas.



Project Highlights

One of the first things Winton Global wanted to do was to develop a solid positioning strategy and statement. During the seminar, they had had difficulty in answering the question ‘what is your competitive advantage?’ and knew that this needed changing. They spent a couple of days with Godin to identify their particular competitive advantage and then find ways to make sure they were indeed excelling in this area. Together they decided that their key advantage was in the area of customer service so set about examining the current state of their customer services. In addition to finding every opportunity for improving how well they serviced their external customers, Godin encouraged them to see each other as internal customers and they set about improving how they dealt with all of the necessary exchanges that take place between the various departments within the company.

Next, the newly fashioned positioning strategy needed to be communicated to Winton Global’s dealer network, to ensure marketing message continuity. Neil was brought in to talk to some of their main dealers. This gave the dealers several strong talking points to help them promote Winton’s products.

One of the customer service issues that Godin identified as having room for improvement was the way Winton handled quotes. Like many manufacturers of custom products, Winton Global was spending a huge amount of time responding to requests for quotations, which were, all too often dead-ends. To rectify this problem, Neil worked with Winton Global to introduce a way to qualify leads he refers to as a ‘no meetings, no quote’ policy. Essentially, if a potential client wants a quote they will need to speak with a sales representative (either by phone or in person) to answer a series of qualifying (and helpful) questions that extract detailed information about their project and needs. This means that the quotes can be done efficiently and more importantly, it weeds out those who are not serious buyers. In addition to an upfront meeting, a follow-up meeting (again either by phone or in person) was recommended to present and go over each quote. Quoting like this develops a relationship wherein the manufacturer becomes a trusted advisor to the client, showing ways to increase quality and reduce costs during the process. Winton has also started to track their conversion ratio on “quotes to sales”.

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Another component to becoming more efficient in the quoting process was to change the structure of the design deposit. Previously, Winton was preparing complete designs for a very nominal fee. This resulted in many potential customers just using Winton as a design service, and not actually purchase what the company really sells, which is packaged homes. By instituting a much more stringent design fee, Winton has been able to further qualify potential customers, as well as reduce the many hours spent by designers on fruitless leads.

Winton will continue working on streamlining its organizational operations. They are looking at how to better field sales calls by re-assigning as many non-selling tasks currently being done by sales people, so they can focus their efforts on selling. While they are being encouraged to focus their current efforts on local markets where sales can be completed more quickly, with Neil's help, they also plan to restructure and accelerate their dealer sales program.



The Results

Although the project is still ongoing, Winton Global attributes their ability to hold steady (during a severe economic downturn) to the work they have been doing under the BIP program. As of today, Winton is ahead (in sales volume) of where they were last year at this time.

The new quoting system showed immediate results in that the ratio of quotes to sales improved dramatically. The employees who do the quotes have experienced an improved morale since they are doing fewer quotes and getting more jobs.

The work Winton Global has done with Neil Godin has helped them to make the shift from being a production driven business model, to a sales and market driven model. This is a difficult shift to make according to Winton Global's General Manager, Marlene Fehr-Power, but one that is essential to surviving in a specialty product market such as theirs. They have made great strides and hope to continue making their business as 'customer-centric' as possible. The involvement of an outside, objective viewpoint was very helpful in getting everyone on-board with the new program.

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