

# Boosting Sales

**Anyone wishing to survive in an industry that is heavily consultancy-based must work for their customers in a more target-oriented manner than others. Viessmann, a company that specializes in heating, which has already implemented a Continuous Improvement Process in all of its business divisions, therefore decided to make its sales division the focus of its next step, and to bring in Porsche Consulting to implement process-oriented reorganization.**

By: Reiner Schloz, Photos by: Jens Mönnich, Viessmann







Hans-Joachim Pez: A whole new kind of customer service

Glass and clean lines characterize the image of Viessmann Werke GmbH & Co. KG's company headquarters in Allendorf. The company, which specializes in heating technology systems, has not only built its business on the principle of transparency, it also lives by it. Employees in all business divisions have been on the lookout for waste for many years now and in their efforts to ensure the constant optimization of working processes, have cultivated a Continuous Improvement Process. This is also seen as a basic requirement in Allendorf, in order to ensure the continuing success of a group that has 111 sales branches operating in 34 countries. As one of the leading manufacturers of heating technology systems in the world, Viessmann recorded sales of €1.2 billion in 2005, of which well over half came from exports. The demands made of sales, which form part of these requirements, are especially high, particularly in this market.

The sector suffered a 15 percent drop nationwide in Germany last year. On the one hand, this can be attributed to the overall economic situation, but on the other, it is also due to the general uncertainty among consumers. The increase in the price of oil and gas is causing consumers to hesitate, and there is a growing desire to use alternative energy sources. However, how many people are truly familiar with renewable energy systems that provide a sensible price-to-performance ratio? This made one thing clear to Hans-Joachim Pez, Head of Sales at Viessmann: "The sales division needed to significantly increase its efficiency on a global level, which included increasing the quality of our targeted customer orientation even further." It was a matter of establishing a highly professional "business-to-business" relationship between the manufacturer and the tradesmen who purchase the systems to install, and who, according to Pez, "wish to offer their customers economical solutions that meet their requirements."

The traditional Continuous Improvement Process had reached its limits, as far as these demands were concerned, which led Viessmann to recognize the advantages of process-oriented reorganization. The tried-and-tested consultancy module developed by Porsche Consulting and Porsche AG is the next step in the process of making the company even leaner. Jochen Haberkorn, Manager of the Sales Management Business Division at Porsche Consulting says: "While the traditional Continuous Improvement Process focuses on eliminating waste within individual processes, process-oriented reorganization focuses on the way in which all processes interact with one another and scrutinizes the entire structure of the organization." In line with this, the project aims were also set at a high level. Besides purely increasing the efficiency of sales processes, it was also a matter of making effective use of the time that sales representatives and customer service technicians spent with customers, improving their ability to be ▶



At home throughout the world: Head of Sales, Pez (right) and Haberkorn, Project Manager from Porsche Consulting



A lot of glass and an open view: Viessmann is far-sighted in its overall approach



Transparency through key figures: Traces of the restructuring of the sales division can be seen wherever you look at Viessmann

contacted by telephone and providing high quality consulting services, as well as responding more quickly to product enquiries. As far as Pez is concerned, the motto of the reorganization process was therefore: "As much proximity to customers as is necessary, as much pooling of resources as possible." During this process, one thing was clear right from the start: Modern communications media have given the word "proximity to customers" a whole new meaning. In Germany alone, each of the thirty-three branches had their own sales force, internal staff and technical services division. As Pez says: "This already begs the question: Does each branch really need all of this?"

As the trend is clearly for a heavily consultancy-based product system, Viessmann decided to consider the issue of proximity to customers in less geographical terms. It was more a question of improving the system and making it easy for everyone to access expert knowledge. As Pez puts it: "Consulting generally takes place by phone. You have to be highly qualified. Ultimately, the tradesman doesn't care where the expert is based."

Since it should be possible to apply the solutions to all markets, the consultants from Porsche Consulting focused during the analysis and design stages on the three relatively large markets of Germany, France and Italy. In order to ensure that the solutions could be applied on a global scale, the relatively small markets such as Austria, Poland, Turkey and Switzerland were analyzed during a second implementation phase. During this process, the consultants defined 14 main processes for the sales division, which they then allocated to the headquarters, to the respective country organizations and to the sales branches. Weak points were then determined during further special analyses. Many were immediately converted into quick wins, others fell into the Continuous Improvement Process category, but around half were allocated to process-oriented reorganization. Finally, this re-

sulted in eight key factors that needed addressing. As Pez puts it: "The subject matter was very complex. I was therefore most surprised by how it was suddenly possible to present the problems and solutions in a manner that was easy to grasp."

The most significant measures included the electronic price list, the optimization of the internal and external electronic interfaces, the grouping together of aftersales activities and the introduction of sets of quality criteria. In addition, product ranges are only put together centrally by experts. The telephone consulting service has been restructured. Improvements made to the "service level" (Pez) are designed to enable 70 percent of all questions to be answered by everyone and 30 percent to be forwarded to experts at company headquarters. Viessmann therefore sees itself as a "learning organization," but it also teaches others quite a bit. The "Viessmann Akademie" is responsible for providing high quality non-product-related technical training sessions, not only at the information centers in Berlin and Allendorf, but also at the branches. Some 60,000 people from all over the world took part last year, and the company intends to further expand their knowledge. In the future, so-called "traveling instructors" will take over the teaching of particularly complex subjects, and the academy also intends to develop a standard format for training throughout the world.

Viessmann is heading in the right direction by increasing the competence of its employees and making it possible for everyone to access expert knowledge quickly and simply by means of an overall centralized system: "We had aimed to achieve percentage improvements in double figures across all areas, and we even exceeded our targets in some areas." Pez is convinced that "this was very important for us in terms of growth, market potential and the safeguarding of jobs in Germany." ◀