

Cognisant Associates help Initiative Software to improve market positioning and channel proposition

Established in 1990, Glasgow-based Initiative Software create and market high quality CRM and call centre software solutions through a channel of selected vendor and reseller partners throughout the UK. Their call centre division was established in 1999 with the launch of synTelate[®], an award-winning desktop customisation, campaign management and scripting package.

synTelate supports a wide range of call centre activities, including customer service, retentions and telemarketing for both in-house and 3rd party environments. To address the particular requirements of the small call centre market Initiative Software have also developed synTelate Lite, which is aimed solely at this market sector. All Initiative Software products are backed by a network of in house or authorised, professional services and support consultants, who have the expertise to ensure that their clients make the best possible use of the product's powerful capabilities.

The challenge

Very soon after the launch of the call centre division, Initiative Software formed a partnership with Lucent Technologies Enterprise Networks (which subsequently became Avaya) to resell synTelate through their UK partner channel, under the brand name of INDeX Workflow Manager. Kevin Clark, Chief Executive Officer for Initiative Software explains further:

"It was during the development of this relationship that I first met Kian Kormi, who subsequently introduced me to Ali Zartash-Lloyd, both of whom were working for Lucent/Avaya at the time. The relationship was reasonably successful but it did illustrate at the time just how difficult it is to sell a software product which is very much seen as an 'add on', without the correct buy-in from the channel partners and from their individual sales people.

This issue was one which we were aware of not only in the relationship with Lucent/Avaya, but also with out other reseller partners, who needed to be educated in proactively promoting the synTelate product at point of sale, when quoting for complete call centre solutions."

It became apparent over time that something needed to be done to generate more interest in and excitement about synTelate within Initiative Software's reseller channel as a whole - and this involved a complete rethink of the way the product was packaged and marketed to the partners and to the end users. The company needed not only to increase revenue but also to increase market awareness – and so decided to look outside of the organisation for some external expertise to assist them in meeting these goals.

The solution

By this time, both Ali and Kian had left Lucent/Avaya and it was logical that Initiative Software would turn towards a resource with some insider knowledge of their products and their issues, to help them move forward. Kevin continues:

"We commissioned Ali Zartash-Lloyd to work with us for a period of three months and to advise us on some changes which we could implement, to make synTelate more attractive to the reseller channel. This involved Ali spending a significant amount of time with our sales manager Roy Holmes, to understand how we were doing things currently and to see what improvements could be made. He looked at our sales presentation in detail and then took it apart and rebuilt it, to make it more interesting for partners. He also prepared a series of recommendations on the

development of new product positioning, plus new collateral items, including not only partner facing materials, but also end-user facing materials for partner use.

During Ali's time working for us he redeveloped our offering into something which was more interesting to the channel and created new messaging both for resellers and for their prospective customers, to generate more excitement about the product and to enable people to see how it could benefit their businesses."

The result

The work which was carried out enabled Initiative Software's channel partners to focus on synTelate and to offer it more proactively as part of an overall call centre solution. It also ensured that the product's benefits were clearly defined and communicated by each partner's sales staff as a differentiator at point of sale. This in turn enabled partners to generate incremental revenue and also assisted Initiative Software themselves to reach their financial targets. Kevin concludes:

"There were tangible benefits in terms of the improved presentations and collateral items," explains Kevin. "But Ali also helped us to understand the channel better, to define what motivates them to sell our products and to help us tune in to market requirements. As an outsider, the views which he had on what we were doing before and the questions he asked showed us how people perceived what we had been presenting. This in turn then enabled us to work together to make the necessary improvements.

Ali also enabled us to find our way into more channels, to get in front of more people and to make sure that the benefits which our product brings were better understood in the marketplace. He also added value for our partners by helping them to understand how to present the product to their customers. All in all, the work which Ali carried out was very helpful and very useful to us."

Roy Holmes, EMEA Business Development Manager for synTelate concludes:

"From my perspective, the key benefit was that Ali helped us to re-evaluate our message to our reseller market. He looked at our materials and our presentations and gave us valuable input which enabled us to revisit our whole presentation technique and our message to the channel. I think that the way we positioned our offer had probably not been clear enough before. We subsequently had more buy in and more take up - in fact, in the 12 months following the activity with Cognisant we achieved an increase of around 25% in our reseller base thanks to the improvements in our partner recruitment techniques, so it certainly worked for us."