



SWIMMING AGAINST THE CURRENT

ONE UNCONVENTIONAL APPROACH

Rosenbluth International, a technology leader in the travel management business, has embarked on a journey to change the quality of digital travel management in much the same way that it revolutionized the concept of corporate travel: by focusing on their employees first and their customers second. While this approach may sound outrageous, CEO and Chairman Hal Rosenbluth credits the company's amazing growth to this unique approach to customer service. This often unconventional – but always inspirational – style is embodied in the selection of a salmon as the company mascot, honoring its contrarian philosophy of “swimming against the current.”

Since Hal joined the company in 1974, Rosenbluth International has grown from a \$20 million family business to a \$5.5 billion privately-held company. It is now one of the largest travel management companies in the world, with more than 5,000 associates and locations fully owned and managed in 24 countries worldwide. The company handles travel arrangements for large corporations such as Credit Suisse, Lucent Technologies, Chevron, Sun Microsystems, Motorola, and Toyota.

A key to Rosenbluth International's success is their commitment to an ever-evolving corporate culture, one that combines work and fun to create an environment fostering performance fulfillment for each of its associates.

They previously earned a spot on *Fortune's 100 Best Companies to Work For*, and are focused on achieving that honor again. The company's senior managers believe that by concentrating on the development and job satisfaction of their associates, they will have happier associates who will in turn provide the highest level of service to their clients.

This idea makes it easy to understand why companies choose Rosenbluth International to manage their travel. Rosenbluth International's ability to be people-focused and technologically savvy has allowed them to achieve a unique balance between personalized service and cutting-edge technology.

CHANGES IN THE INDUSTRY

Yet, Rosenbluth International is facing changes in their industry. The emergence of new distribution channels via the Internet has made differentiating between suppliers increasingly difficult, empowering better-informed consumers to demand more information about their travel choices. Rapid consolidation is also taking place, and travel management companies are being forced to seek out new and more profitable sales distribution channels. With corporations looking for ways to cut costs on travel, travel management companies seeking to “remain in the game” must play a more consultative and strategic role in helping clients make (travel) budgetary decisions.

With all of this in mind, Rosenbluth International has charted a path to reinvent

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itself in the marketplace. Wilson Learning has helped advance this strategy by integrating the ‘consultative approach’ into every facet of Rosenbluth International’s client relationships.

“Wilson Learning played a critical role in the reinvention of our sales force and our clients’ perception of our value;”

said Ron DiLeo, Rosenbluth International’s Executive Vice President for North America.

Wilson Learning Account Executive Jan Broll has played a key role in this process, employing her vast experience in the travel industry to understand Rosenbluth International’s business from the inside out. Wilson Learning facilitators Clare O’Connell

and Janis Lipsitz have also contributed greatly to the performance improvement initiative, customizing solutions to provide value. “They can drop something in our laps, and we know enough about their company, their business, and their issues, that we can run with it,” says Broll. “It’s an immense advantage to them that they don’t have to start from square one.”

SQUARE ONE

Square one in Rosenbluth International’s relationship with Wilson Learning was a single page RFP on sales training. In response to the RFP, Broll crafted a proposal to reframe the basic sales training into a dynamic performance improvement solution. This approach capitalized on the company’s highly personalized service, their continual focus on technological innovation, and their perspectives on the future of digital travel management. And, of course, it was important to leverage the strength of Rosenbluth International’s unique culture and values. Wilson Learning’s work showed associates how to uncover client needs and expectations and then articulate their value in a way that directly addresses those needs.

“The reason they chose us and we have been so effective is because we are an excellent cultural fit,” remarked Broll. “They really believe in performance with fulfillment. They’re awesome. They’re a company with heart – and so is Wilson Learning.”

At the start of the project, Rosenbluth International stated three major goals for their sales organization. First, they needed to concentrate on increasing revenue and profitability while overcoming pressure from lower commissions and a rapidly changing environment. Second, the company endeavored to build on the leadership position they had attained for high quality customer service. Finally, Rosenbluth International sought a renewed commitment to the development of their associates, associate retention, and strengthening of their culture. Wilson Learning was instrumental in turning those goals into reality.

“The executives provided very clearly articulated goals, yet when we would talk with the salespeople and the sales managers, their question was: ‘How do we do that?’” remarked

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In sum, what began as a one page RFP for sales training in North America has now matured to a company-wide global partnership. From an executive perspective, “Our partnership with Wilson Learning has positively impacted our growth in revenue and profitability, as well as client and associate satisfaction,” according to DiLeo. As Rosenbluth International looks forward to the business challenges of the next year, they know that associate satisfaction remains critical to the company’s success and to the success of their clients. Together, that destination can be reached. *W*

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O’Connell. “They understood what senior management wanted them to do, but they really didn’t know how to do it.” Wilson Learning provided solutions that truly increased the performance and confidence level of the sales force.

“We have increased the consulting skills of the entire North American work force – they have learned to articulate value to justify price,” added Broll.

By teaching their associates how to overcome objections, Rosenbluth International immediately increased their ability to improve margins and strengthen profitability.

There were indeed challenges associated with this change in approach. “Customer satisfaction is an integral part of the Rosenbluth International culture – I mean it’s clearly why they think they’re in business – to do whatever it is the customer wants,” remarked O’Connell.

UNPARALLELED CONTRIBUTION

The Rosenbluth International and Wilson Learning teams have collaborated to achieve both departmental goals and company goals. In fact at the 2001 Worldwide Leader’s Meeting, Alex Wasilov, the President of Rosenbluth International, approached Broll to thank her for Wilson Learning’s contribution to one of the best year’s in the company’s history.