

# virtual excellence

## MAKING YOUR VIRTUAL TEAMS WORK



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### SOUND FAMILIAR ?

“Our global/pan regional customers are difficult to manage”

“Our global customers erode our average profitability”

“Our global/regional account management team seem more like a group of individuals each doing their own thing”

“We sometimes suffer conflict between global/regional and country level directors”

“Our information systems do not give me a clear picture of what is happening with our global customers”

**If any of the above apply to your business, read on ...**

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### TODAY'S BUSINESS REALITY ...

For many supplier businesses today, a handful of global/pan regional customers represent a large proportion of volume/profit and hence effective management of these customers is critical.

Global customers are evolving their systems and processes rapidly in order to allow cross market pricing/terms comparisons (stripping out any duty/tax issues quickly and easily). This can lead to margin erosion as pricing/terms move to their lowest global level.

Some businesses remain organised along country or cluster lines with power resting with country MD's. In this situation customer strategies are often dictated more by lead country need than by a global customer or key account strategy, and this can lead to less than ideal global outcomes.

Often we find that both roles/responsibilities and reporting lines for global account teams have not been

clarified fully. Typically the direct reporting line is into the home market MD or Sales Director with at best a dotted line into a global head of Key Accounts. Roles and responsibilities are often developed locally and do not reflect accurately global account management requirements. This situation can lead to confusion and conflict between local and global management teams.

### **... AND WHAT YOU CAN DO**

Develop a highly trained global customer management team with clear direction - a global customer management strategy aligned with overall company strategy - and an open flow of information to allow informed decision making. The team needs to have clearly defined operating standards and a comprehensive communications plan in order that team members truly “*feel*” like part of a team.

**Where we have seen this work effectively, business through global accounts has increased dramatically.**



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### **THE CURRENT REALITY**

**We have analysed the global account management of our clients over the last eight years and have commonly observed the following issues :**

- Many teams do not share a common language – hence the word “profit” or “margin” mean different things in different regions. This can lead to conflict and confusion.
- Information flow is sometimes not optimised fully for strong global account management. Even where clients have had expensive IT systems introduced we have not seen full and open flow of global customer information to support global

decision making and to encourage sharing of best practices.

- Common ways of working are often not in place around the globe. What a customer sees in terms of sales presentation, sales planning or a business proposal may differ widely from region to region.
- Communications difficulties are the biggest reason we hear for a lack of team cohesion. When the working days of individuals in Tokyo, London and LA barely overlap it is very easy for communication to default to e-mail. It is critical that ways are found to cement the team through video conferencing, webex, teleconferencing and other means – this should be seen as a critical role of the Global Account Director.
- Cultural differences can be highlighted in global teams – all too often we observe global teams where debate is dominated by one market or region. The more naturally assertive and open styles prevalent in the USA and Northern Europe can easily dominate the natural styles of southern Europe and Asia to the detriment of the team. Again careful and thoughtful planning is required to ensure genuine team cohesion.
- Reporting lines and roles and responsibilities must be clear. The responsibility of global account managers is to implement the global account strategy through their customers –not to hit the quarter’s lead country volume or profit target via short term dealing ! Reporting should typically be direct to a global account director who should be a member of the senior management team or have a seat on the board to ensure a global customer voice is heard.

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## OUR SOLUTION: VIRTUAL EXCELLENCE

Virtual Excellence (VE) is a holistic approach to the development of global teams, encapsulating all elements of global account management. It has been developed in a modular format to enable clients to take a step-by-step approach to implement their VE strategy and process effectively and with maximum impact.

**01** The process begins with our **Online VE Assessment** in which both directors and global account managers complete a comprehensive online questionnaire which identifies the organisation’s strengths and weaknesses against our c.100 global best practice customer management standards.

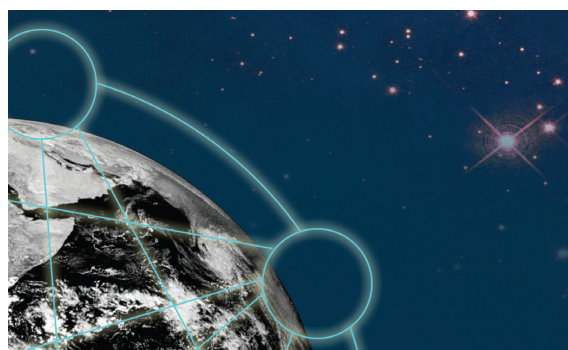
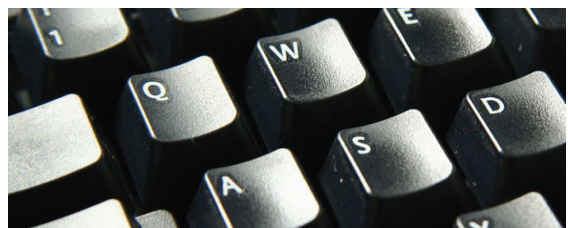
**02** This is a facilitated **Action Planning Workshop** in which the findings of our Online Assessment are shared and management led through a structured process to arrive at VE development priorities. Typically there are three levels of priority as shown.

### VE ACTION PLANS

VE Quick Wins

VE Big Prizes

VE Strategic Initiatives



**03** Using the outputs from stage 2 we agree a roadmap of **VE Development Modules**, which offer our clients the “best fit” solution. The modules are customised to client requirements and form the basis for the development efforts to make rapid progress.

#### VE DEVELOPMENT MODULES

VE Overview : Introduction to Virtual Teams

Orientation Model (VTO)

VE Roles & Responsibilities & Reporting

VE Adoption of IT

VE IT Support - Technology

VE Operating Standards and Planning

VE Cultures and Behaviours



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## THE DELIVERY TEAM

In order to develop a holistic programme we have combined the global account management skills of Springboard with the technology and cultural and behavioural skills of HRCgroup. Our lead team is shown below.

**Shawn IRELAND** : Shawn is a founding partner and managing director of HRCgroup, an international management development and organisation development practice based in the UK, Singapore, Canada and USA.

Shawn has worked extensively with international Fortune 500 companies, such as Cable & Wireless, Schlumberger, Coca Cola, Atos Origin, various public sector organisations, and diversely with organisations such as the Wellcome Trust, NATO, the US Department of Defense. He has also acted as advisor to domestic government departments in the Middle East, West Africa and Europe. Shawn is on the faculties of Henley Business School, UK, Simon Fraser University, and the University of Canada West, in Vancouver, Canada.

His areas of subject matter expertise include managing human behaviour, leadership, strategy, virtual teamworking, cross-cultural communication and critical thinking. He is a clinical psychologist by training, and received his MA and PhD from Columbia University, New York. Shawn has published on virtual teams, as well as critical thinking for managers.

**Chris HUDD** : Chris is a founding partner and Director of Training at Springboard Commercial Solutions Ltd. In his role as director of training and development Chris has trained sales professionals in many industry sectors and markets across Europe, including Phillips, Electrolux, Twinings, Danone Water, Danone Dairy, Ryvita, Bausch and Lomb.

Chris's expertise is focused on bespoke commercial training and is founded upon a career spanning both UK and Spanish major account management and pan European sales development. His focus areas are Key Account Management and Category Development, Customer Management benchmarking /evaluation, Customer Management Training and Organisational Development.

In his corporate life Chris was a member of the “Diageo Way of Brand Building through Customers” team - a global sales initiative ; Sales Development Director, Seagram EMEA, responsible for the development of sales skills and Category Management across Europe ; Take Home Trade Controller Europe, Guinness Brewing ; Channel Head, Grupo Cruzcampo, Seville ; National Account Manager, Guinness UK. Chris is an active CIPD Committee Member, a guest lecturer at Herriot Watt University, and regularly publishes thought leadership articles in trade/academic journals.

**Mark HOLLYOAKE** : Mark is a director of Springboard and leads the consulting practice, working across many industry sectors, companies and retailers in Europe. His expertise is focused on Customer Experience (CE) and Customer Management (CM) strategy development, CM evaluation, and execution of CE/CM improvement plans (inc. organisational modelling), partnership & alliance development.

Previously Mark worked for QCi (Ogilvy One) on customer management consulting assignments within the private, public, not for profit and quazi public sectors. In his corporate life Mark was Group Sales Development manager for United Biscuits, and directly involved with enhancing the commercial UB operations in Hungary, Germany, France, Russia, North America and the UK. Subsequently he developed and implemented bespoke solutions on; category development, sales strategy, relationship management, competency and capability development and point of

purchase control & influence. Mark wrote, developed and delivered the "United Biscuits Way" of Integrated Partnerships. As director of North Eastern Europe for Guinness he was responsible for initiating, developing and managing alliances/ distributors/ partners within the region.

Mark received his MBA from Henley Business School, UK, and has written and published articles on virtual organisations and groups.

**Paula HART** : Paula is a consultant with HRCgroup, and has many years' experience in the learning and development environment. Previously, she was the global management development manager with Schlumberger in Paris for many years, designing, developing and running their global management development programme, for the oilfield services, smart telecommunications and electricity, gas and water utilities, businesses worldwide. She also has experience working with private, public and third sector organisations, to support them in improving leadership, organisational performance, facilitating change initiatives, developing a coaching culture, and facing the challenges of virtual working.

She is bilingual in French and English, and received her BSc(Hons) in Linguistics and Law (French and German) from the University of Surrey and her degree in Languages and Administration from the Universities of the Sorbonne and Lille. She also holds a Certificate in Coaching from Henley Business School, and a diploma in Business Management.



## FIND OUT MORE

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