LIZARD PROMISES A BRING FUTURE FOR THORN LIGHTING

THE CLIENT

Thorn Lighting, part of the Zumtobel Group, is a highly recognised global brand for professional indoor and outdoor lighting.

It has established market leadership in the UK and strong positions in France and the Nordic region. The company is also a leading lighting supplier in the Australian and Hong Kong markets and is fast developing its presence in the Far East, particularly in China and Singapore.

The brand delivers pace-setting technical innovations to broad-based target groups - especially distributors, electricians, users, lighting designers, architects, specifiers and municipalities - and stands for reliability, outstanding customer service, high functionality and technically advanced design.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- People do business with people, not companies
- Complex supply chains to be negotiated
- Long lead times on projects

"My numbers are good, so why do you need to know where I am and what I'm doing?" is a point frequently argued by many salespeople. Sales personnel are independent by nature and notoriously resistant to being held to account.

But with a high turnover of salespeople being the norm across every industry, companies suffer not just from loss of expertise and the burden of time spent on recruitment but also from losing business relationships and personal contacts.

OVERVIEW

The need

To capture vital business information in order to increase profitability and professionalism of Thorn Lighting.

The solution

Transputec's LIZARD project management software.

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"Even the very best salespeople do not always minute actions and events," said Gary Haynes, Commercial Planning Manager, Thorn

Lighting, "and often when they do, it's in their own personal paper-based diaries. This works fine for that salesperson on a day-to-day basis, but of course once they leave the company, we lose a whole history of communication and relationship-building along with them."

Gary expressed how vital individual relationships are in business, particularly in the construction industry. "In our world, individuals do business with other individuals and knowing what can seem like a tiny trivial piece of information about how a contractor operates can make all the difference when tendering for a project".

Grant Daniels, Managing Director UK & Ireland, Thorn Lighting, added: "We have learned to our cost that it is better to choose the clients you work for with discretion, because two-and-a-half years down the line, you don't want the client running off with your design and getting the work done cheaper elsewhere.

"Selling into the construction industry is notoriously complex. There are a huge number of influences and usually a very long supply chain including architects, engineers, contractors, project managers, cost consultants and a whole raft of other niche consultants, from landscapers to lighting designers. And what complicates things even further is that different people carry the clout in different supply chains and it can be impossible to second-guess who might be the main influencers.

"Before we had LIZARD, we had already realized that building a clear picture of how these supply chains operate and holding as much information as possible about key individuals was vital to improving our business performance. It's now hard to believe that LIZARD developed out of a glorified Excel spreadsheet. Out homemade solution did a good enough job at the time, but we got ambitious and wanted more".

The benefits

- Able to generate market reports in minutes

- Identify best customers and time wasters

- Intuitive user-friendly interface

- Speeds up analysing of diaries at year end

- Identifies best salespeople

- Keeps consistency in quoting

- Helps key account managers look their national accounts

- Client mapping system will allow Thorn to predict probablity of winning a tender based on supply chain data

- Sales personnel rise to challenge of being more accuntable – and are rewarded for performance

- Identifies which sectors are growing and which are shrinking

- Identifies most profitables sectors

- Help with targeting new business

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A further factor to be considered when looking for a solution was that Thorn Lighting has no regional offices in the UK and the field sales team is home-based. Working independently from laptops, the team needed a simple and intuitive system that they could use with the minimum of support.

THE SOLUTION

- Bespoke project management system from Transputec
- Fully integrated with SAP CRM
- Minimal training needs

"We looked at various solutions, including Microsoft CRM, SAP CRM and Tranputec's LIZARD system," said John Peach, Business Systems Analyst, Thorn Lighting.

Both John and Gary thought that the Microsoft solution seemed good, but found the cost implications prohibitive. And whilst SAP was the system of choice for the mainland Europe parent group, John quickly identified that it did not capture all the information the UK operation required. A shared diary function, follow-up calls and interaction with customers were all cited as business critical functions that SAP was lacking.

"Although SAP CRM software comes in industry-specific versions," said Gary, "we still felt that as a solution, it was not matched closely enough to our operations. We also found its interface difficult to use and anticipated problems and resistance from the sales staff."

LIZARD, on the other hand, was designed as a bespoke CRM, sales, quotations and project management tool for sister company Zumtobel. Zumbotel had gone down the bespoke route in 2000, finding no off-the-shelf system that adequately accommodated the long lead times of its projects and their complex supply chains. LIZARD is built around an Outlook diary-type interface and makes use of familiar navigational devices including dropdown menus and notes-based typing.

"We were all involved in choosing Transputec's LIZARD system", said Gary, "and it was a unanimous decision".

Customer feedback

"Zumtobel has doubled its UK turnover in the last five years and I would say that LIZARD was a large part of that."

Grant Daniels, Managing Director UK & Ireland, Thorn Lighting

"LIZARD will make us more profitable by removing the guesswork and identifying which are really our best customers."

Gary Haynes, Commercial Planning Manager, Thorn Lighting

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LIZARD launched in November 2004 and the first phase of the software development enabled both remotely based salespeople and head office engineers to register and monitor projects and update their client databases whilst enabling management to track sales. Within a year the full functionality of LIZARD was operational with add-ons including quotations, expenses and engineering resource planning modules. It is now based on a Citrix server and uses 3G and broadband for remote logins.

Transputec handled training needs, with sessions being run in each region. Ongoing ad-hoc training is now provided in-house at regional team meetings as new features are added to the system. "But to be honest," said Gary, "the software is largely intuitive to use, and our training needs have been pretty modest".

In May 2005 when SAP CRM was rolled out to the UK, Transputec ensured that LIZARD fully integrated with it. LIZARD now successfully operates as a bolt-on to the pan-European SAP system, bringing essential additional functionality and a user-friendly interface suitable for personnel at many levels.

THE BENEFITS

"LIZARD brings benefits at every level of our business," said Grant. "At an operational level, it is absolutely central for facilitating our salesman with project tracking. At any one time they might have up to 120 open projects and LIZARD helps enormously with the juggling act that they must perform".

Whilst acknowledging that there has been some resistance amongst the sales team to using LIZARD, Gary sees this as a natural transitional stage. "From the earliest opportunity all our best salespeople were using the system because they could appreciate that by making a small amount of effort to input information every day they would ultimately reap the reward in terms of their figures.

"The people who tend to grumble the most are the ones who have been with us the longest - whereas new starters take to using the system with no protest," he added. "Put it this way - if they had to get to grips with SAP they would be complaining even more!"

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Grant also pointed out that the sales team is involved in ongoing refining of the system. "We actively encourage feedback on its usability and regularly make improvements. For example, we've recently worked with Transputec to introduce a greater number of dropdown menus".

Moving up the company structure, Grant says that LIZARD gives Thorn's sales managers a much more transparent perspective of how their teams work. Sales people now have to log a project on the system - including detailing market sector, who specified the job, estimated delivery date, initial notes and a follow-up date - before they can claim expenses against it. This is also true in order to generate quotes. With every quote logged against a job, the risk of misquoting further down the line is removed.

"Another way LIZARD benefits sales managers," said Gary, "is that it can notify them when one of their team is operating over-capacity and hence potentially avert a crisis".

"At director level," said Grant, "LIZARD really comes into its own. It becomes a forecasting tool and is essential for helping us to steer expansion. We can now see at the touch of a button how many times a salesperson has visited a particular client and how many hours they have spent with them in total in order to generate the business. In this way, we can spot our top-spending customers as well as the time-wasters".

LIZARD has helped Thorn Lighting to identify new territories and to intelligently focus new business development. "We now know which sectors are growing and which are static," said Gary. "For example, we've recently been very successful in the schools and education market and have learned that it is a profitable sector for us to target. We simply didn't used to capture this sort of information and relied much more on gut feeling. Now we can generate invaluable reports based on our past performance and the combined experience of the whole company at the touch of a button".

Gary explained that what LIZARD most importantly offers above and beyond SAP is the ability to record and analyse details of personal contact between individuals. "SAP only allows us to work at a company level," he said. "In other words, you can't record details of client contacts and individual contact time between Thorn salespeople and client company personnel. It's also far more complicated to use."

"LIZARD, on the other hand, just keeps expanding to meet the needs of our business," said Grant. "It is getting more user-friendly and tailored to our business all the time. That's the beauty of a bespoke system.

"We're currently developing a function that I call client-mapping," said Grant. "Once it is live it will help us to target projects that have supply chains that work to our benefit. Whilst individual sales people might know which suppliers are favoured by which contractors, the new LIZARD function will make sure this knowledge is easily shared throughout the whole business.

"LIZARD really is an exceptional tool in all regards," he added. And whilst it is too early for us to put figures on how LIZARD has improved our business, the results at Zumtobel speak for themselves.

"Zumtobel has doubled its turnover in the last five years and I would say that LIZARD was at least 70 percent responsible for that.

THE PEDIGREE

Since our inception in the mid-1980s, Transputec has had the trust of Britain's foremost IT users, including the Ministry of Justice, Samsung, Danone, Camelot, Chubb Insurance and DP-DHL/ Williams Lea to name but a few.

Vertical sector experience covering banking & finance, media, third sector, technology, retail, SMEs and health care adds further value to IT users in the form of industry-specific knowledge.

The human component

The pace of change in ICT is so fast that what was cutting edge technology just a few years ago we now need to refer to as *traditional IT* in order to differentiate it from what we're doing today and tomorrow.

A business like Transputec is as much about its people - their experience, customer-focus and expertise - as anything else. From initial assessment to delivery of turnkey solutions and day-to-day customer care, these professionals take solutions from Transputec's hardware, software and professional services business units and ensure they're a perfect fit.

Throughout our supply chain we have exceptional relationships with the world's premier hardware and software brands, giving us a competitive edge to make everything from economies of scale to mission-critical architecture judgment calls.

ENVIRONMENT AND CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

While Transputec might well be said to have its head in The Cloud, our corporate feet are firmly on the ground. Our Green Data Centre in Iceland boasts impeccable eco-credentials that embrace natural free cooling up to 24kWh and zero carbon footprint.

One of the biggest power consumers in any business is the hosting of their IT equipment. It runs 24/7/365 consuming vast amounts of power – every business needs to look for ways to deliver Green IT.

For a comprehensive guide see http://www.transputec.com/green-it/

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