

## Background:

This initiative was undertaken for a Fortune 500 company oil sector, this company is the market leader in its segment in India, with the largest network of retail outlets. The oil sector was poised for a major change with the government's decision to abolish Administered Price Mechanism from April 2002. Oil companies had six years to adapt themselves to the post APM scenario. The changed market dynamics were to lead to increased competition and customer expectation.

## NIS Sparta's Association

NIS Sparta's association with the company started with aim of preparing the employees for the changed scenario. They needed to adapt themselves fast in order to maintain their leadership position. Based on the results from a survey conducted by the oil major at the petrol pumps to identify the exact areas that will be impacted by change, a customized training program was designed by NIS Sparta.

NIS Sparta's solution recommended a change in attitude and mindset of the employees as well as their dealers and the petrol pump attendants to deal with the major change. In addition, the sales team needed to understand the diverse needs of different customers and attend to them. They also needed to be more aggressive in selling but sensitive to customer requirements. They needed to be clear about their roles and responsibilities.

## Scope of Intervention

A survey conducted among 8953 customers by the oil company at its retail outlets revealed that the customers expect a good service at the pumps. But it was found to be lacking at the outlets. Behavioral issues came up very strongly, when service was discussed. Another survey revealed that several factors important to servicing like courteousness of the employees, speed of attending to customers were much below expectation.

Based on this survey, NIS Sparta recommended a 'Smart Seller Series' to be conducted in three parts. The first of the series, Smart Seller I - Vision 2000 Pumps had two objectives:

- Helping the sales team of oil company develop skills to convince dealers to upgrade petrol pumps from B to A sites by making investments in infrastructure, facilities and quality of manpower.
- Training petrol pump attendants on customer-interfacing skills.

NIS Sparta started with conducting Attitudinal Transformation program for the Marketing Department at Mumbai.

The Smart Seller II program was aimed at training sales team for managing major customers. It involved:

- Helping the sales team identify customer needs, manage competition, meet requirements and address objections of major customers.
- Accompanying sales team and supervisors on actual calls to help implement learning.

The third in the series of Smart Seller Program, 'Killer Instinct' was launched to help the sales team and the operation staff aggressively manage competition and reduce wastage.

Apart from the Smart Seller Programs, training programs were conducted for different levels, on the basis of the concerns identified. The state heads underwent an empowerment program and the field personnel were trained on customer orientation. The administrative and other non-field personnel were taken through result orientation

program and the promotee officers underwent an officers program. To make the terminal and depot personnel more efficient in managing inventory, they were taken through the smart suppliers program.

## Results

The post training analysis conducted at the petrol pumps showed significant changes in the petrol pump attendants. The owners/managers said that they observed an improvement in the behavior of the attendants and the customers reported speedy transaction after the training. The retention of learning was found to be high.