



## Sales and Marketing Excellence Programme: developing managers with cutting-edge concepts, fresh perspectives and new ideas

### Business Context

The Acer Group is a family of three brands: Acer, Gateway and Packard Bell. This unique multi-brand strategy allows each to offer a unique set of brand characteristics that targets different customer needs in the global PC market. The Acer Group ranks number 4 for total PCs (2013) and has a global workforce of 7,400 employees. Revenues for 2013 reached over US\$12 billion.

The fast pace of change in the technology sector – in retailing and product development – requires the sales and marketing teams to keep a clear perspective on Acer's market opportunities and challenges. In the spring of 2015, 34 senior managers from across Acer's EMEA region attended its Sales & Marketing Excellence Programme. Held at the company's Lugano offices in Switzerland, it was facilitated and conducted by FT | IE Corporate Learning Alliance.

### Programme Aims

An informal network of senior sales and marketing managers, drawn from a wide geographical base and nominated by functional heads, made up the participants of the programme. Many of them had not met before; so the diverse market conditions and differences between their locations allowed them to share experiences and practices, make new connections and exchange ideas.

The primary objective of the course was to teach participants the elements of effective and persuasive communication to enable them to achieve concise, effective communications and messaging in sales and marketing, including negotiations skills.

Additional important goals of the programme were to:

- Develop sales and marketing managers with cutting-edge concepts and fresh perspectives and Ideas.
- Facilitate common understanding, knowledge sharing, best practices and teamwork among the participants.
- Develop and present suggestions/ideas for operational challenges.

In preparation, the members of the group were asked to consider three questions:

- How can we do things better?
- How can we align ourselves and our ways of working more closely?
- How and where can we introduce consistent sales and marketing processes?

### The Programme

The programme blended face-to-face and online learning over a three-month period from April to June 2015. It consisted of these modules:

- Presentation skills: participants were shown how personal communication has an impact on their own reputation, their team and their organisation.
- Advanced negotiation: how to evaluate and use tools to effectively analyse negotiations, and learning skills that enhance their effectiveness.
- Marketing and sales: exploring customer perceptions and understanding the factors that influence a consumer's decision-making process.
- Pricing for profit: how the ability to manage effective pricing positively influences a company's growth and profitability.
- Marketing communication: how to get the right messages to the right customers, and understanding communication objectives.
- Managing brands: how customer loyalty can be built by developing strategic and well-defined brands.
- Business projects: during the first module, participants formed four groups and throughout the learning programme analysed the challenging question: 'How to differentiate Acer from Competition in an effective way?' focusing on the following areas:

- branding
- pricing for profit
- marketing communication
- price negotiation

Group members had to collaborate virtually to develop their solutions which were presented to the Acer senior executive panel during the final module of the programme.



### Programme Educators

FT | IE Corporate Learning Alliance engaged three IE Business School professors and associate professors to deliver the programme:

- Martin Boehm: Professor of Marketing: his key interests lie in the shift in the corporate world from transaction-based to relationship-based marketing, and how strong customer relationships can increase a company's long-term profitability.
- Lola Martinez: Associate Professor of Communication and Presentation Skills: a well-known TV news presenter, including her 12 years with CNN.
- Moray McLaren: Associate Professor of Advanced Negotiation Skills: Moray has been involved in the delivery of legal and management training programmes, including negotiation, for 15 years.



### Results and Conclusions

The programme resulted in significant advantages for participants and for Acer:

- Enhanced skills based on communications and negotiation.
- Successful investment in executive networking, motivation and career development.
- Positive exchange of ideas and best practice across Acer's EMEA region.
- Understanding of different markets and appropriate sales and marketing techniques to meet new challenges.

### Feedback

Participant feedback results

Very satisfied	70%
Satisfied	30%
Neither	0%
Unsatisfied	0%
Very unsatisfied	0%

"The programme provided excellent preparation for meeting the market challenges in the technology sector. Networking among the group and discovering more about our colleagues from across the region has already resulted in an employee from South Africa promoted and joining our team in Germany." **Trivikram Jayacham, HR Development Director.**

### Participant comments:

"Thank you FTIE and ACER for really inspiring us to grow in our professional lives."

"All participants were challenged and motivated to contribute - a big plus to all professors and staff."

"It was really challenging to handle the co-work with different people from different countries ... I hope the ideas will lead to real projects and change things. There were many exciting ideas."