

Sales & Marketing eBulletin

*A quarterly eBulletin from the people who bring you the
Sales & Marketing Executive MindXchange*

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Executing CEO's Growth Initiatives through Sales and Marketing

An interview with

D. Keith Pigues

Senior Vice President

Chief Marketing Officer

PlyGem, Inc

An interview with D. Keith Pigues, Senior Vice President, Chief Marketing Officer and member of the executive committee for Ply Gem, Inc. Keith joined Ply Gem in August, 2007 with responsibility for marketing and strategy for the corporation. Ply Gem is a leading provider of exterior building products brands in the window, siding and fencing and railing categories.

Q. How are you helping to execute the CEO's growth initiatives?

A. I lead strategy development and execution for several marketing and sales initiatives that contribute to the CEO's growth priorities, including: branding, new market development, new products and environmental sustainability. Additionally, my team provides marketing and sales support for the corporate cross-selling initiative.

Q. What are the most significant accomplishments from the branding initiative?

A. We launched the new Ply Gem corporate brand early in 2007 to support the company's transformation from a holding company (seven previous independent companies) to a single operating company with two strategic business units. We created a new company mission and vision, brand promise, corporate identity, and integrated corporate brand communications campaign targeting Ply Gem associates and customers.

We officially launched the new corporate brand at the 2008 International Builders Show in February of 2008, supported by an integrated tradeshow marketing and public relations plan – resulting in the acquisition of over 60 new customers and a ROI of over 100% to-date. We accomplished these results in the midst of an industry downturn.

We will launch phase two of the branding initiative to strategically position our product brands, as we experienced overlap among some of our key brands in moving to a single operating company. This will allow us to provide greater clarity for customers and provide focused investments in fewer brands – increasing the equity in our major brands. We anticipate implementing this phase of the branding initiative later in 2008.

Q. How do you define new market development and what are you doing in this area?

A. We sell our products through various distribution channels, including building products wholesalers, specialty distributors, dealers, and retailers. Our new market development initiative with homebuilders is designed to create greater demand (or pull) for our products. In addition to the more traditional marketing and strategy responsibilities, I also lead a newly-created national homebuilder sales organization that works directly with builders to gain specification for Ply Gem branded products for use in their building projects. We have generated significant new business in a short period of time and are excited about the longer-term growth opportunities with this initiative to accelerate organic growth.

Q. Have you had much success in the area of new products?

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A. Yes, we have had some early success, but we have much greater opportunities and challenges ahead. Our industry consists primarily of products with low-to-mid single digit growth rates and little product differentiation. Earlier this year, we launched one of the industry's few major new products in our window business unit – allowing us to expand into the more profitable premium window category.

Additionally, we are developing the capability to systematically identify and develop additional new products – increasing the number of new products and accelerating time to market. We are taking the best of the new product development and commercialization processes from the seven predecessor companies and developing a single Ply Gem approach to identify opportunities, prioritize funding and resources allocation, manage the product development activities, and evaluate success of all new product development projects.

Q. How does environmental sustainability initiative contribute to the growth agenda?

A. Environmental sustainability and green building represent a great opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to the environment through corporate responsibility, reducing the footprint of our operations and providing products that contribute to green building. This is an initiative with significant implications for the company and can provide great support for the sales force and their selling efforts. To achieve success, it is important for the sales force to understand the key environmental issues, the company commitment, as well as the environmental benefits products provide to customers.

Q. Cross-selling is typically a responsibility of the sales organization. How is your organization involved in this initiative?

A. Good question. Let me begin by saying, one of the misconceptions is that traditional sales initiatives are the sole responsibility of the sales organization. However, a collaborative effort between the marketing and sales organizations will result in better results – the marketing organization providing a compelling value proposition for the target customers and the sales organization executing that value proposition with specific product combinations or solutions that are right for each customer – tailoring them as appropriate. And, when this is followed by the marketing organization providing effective sales support, companies can get more from the investment in the sales and marketing organizations.