

Act! – best in the field for growing business



act!

With plans to **expand its business** internationally, agricultural chemical supplier 1,4GROUP has given its sales and relationship building process a **boost** by revisiting the way it was using Act! to make it **even more effective**.



Harvested crops that don't last are no use to anyone. Not only do they leave supermarket shelves empty or filled with substandard produce, but they also mean that farmers don't have the seed stock from which to grow next year's food.

So a company like 1,4GROUP, which supplies dormancy enhancing and sprout inhibiting agricultural chemicals to prevent potatoes from sprouting prematurely after harvest, plays a vital role in maintaining our food supplies.

With its headquarters in Idaho, one of America's 'potato states', 1,4GROUP has a ready market for its products on the doorstep. However, with offices in Mexico, Canada and plans to expand internationally – the company is already selling into New Zealand, Thailand, the UK and will soon be moving into the rest of Europe – this is a global business that requires a robust approach to managing its sales.

Fingertip knowledge

Though an established Act! user, following personnel changes the company lacked someone to ensure that the sales team were getting the best from it ... until Brian Winn was appointed as the company's technical representative for the western US office, and became its unexpected champion.

"When I joined 1,4GROUP early in 2014, I hadn't used Act! before, or any program like it," explains Brian. "In fact, I came from an environment where information about customers and prospects was kept in manila folders and notes about each contact written on the outside."

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Brian Winn

Technical Representative at 1,4GROUP

However, despite this lack of background, when Brian was asked to get Act! firing on all cylinders, he didn't hesitate to take on the task.

Intuitive to use

"There's no steep learning curve with Act! because it has a really **intuitive interface** that makes it very easy to work with," says Brian, who's also responsible for training new staff on the software. "So a new user can be up and running and already productive after just a few hours."

From a personal perspective, Act! has also made a real difference to the way Brian works.

A more effective work structure

"Act! has given me a work structure that I never had before. So now when I arrange a callback with a customer or prospect, I know Act! will automatically drop that into my calendar and then sync across my computer and phone. That means I begin each day with a plan of action of who I'm going to call, why and when."

This alone makes Brian much **more productive**, and it's the same for the rest of the team.

"And if I know I'm going to be in a particular area" says Brian, "I can use Act! to generate a list of local customers and

contacts, then arrange to drop by when I'm there," says Brian. "By touring their storage sheds, I start to **build a picture** of the issues they're facing and how I might be able to help them, if not right now, then sometime in the future."

"With Act! I can just keep adding and reviewing information about old and new customers, so **no-one gets forgotten about** and the pertinent data is there to help make a sale."

A united sales team

But while Act! is **playing a fundamental role** in helping Brian and the rest of the team build the customer relationships that are so important in the agricultural sector, it also helps bind 1,4GROUP's seven-strong sales team together.

"With Act! we can see what everyone else in the team is doing in real time," says Brian, "which means we're all aware of new opportunities coming up and can **share information and knowledge**. So even though we're scattered across various states and down into Mexico and Canada, and only get to meet up in one place three or four times a year, Act! brings the sales team together every day."

Improved management and reporting

For all of its benefits however, the company recognised that it still wasn't using Act! to its full potential, which is why recently they called in Range CRM Consulting to help them get up to date with the latest features. "Cynthia Thomas at Range CRM has opened our eyes to **the ever increasing possibilities of Act!** In fact, we are right in the middle of some custom work as we speak!"

Now, through a programme of webinars in both English and Spanish, Brian and the team are discovering more and more about how to make best use of reporting tabs, so managers have **a better understanding** of what's coming down the pipeline, and can focus on higher probability sales.

An international perspective

Act! will also have a new role to play over the next few years, as 1,4GROUP expands into Europe, where the potential to increase market share is great.

"We now have another technical sales rep on the ground in Europe," says Brian, "which means we will first have to build up a picture of the market and the different relationships within it, so Act! is going to be very important in sharing and using that information."

With Act! in place, 1,4GROUP should very soon be harvesting an even bigger crop of new business from around the world.

Results



Thanks to Act!, 1,4GROUP has:

- Been able to **bring together** a sales team that is geographically dispersed across states and even different countries.
- Given the sales team a **more efficient way to gather and access data**, enabling them to build **deeper relationships** with many more prospective customers in the agricultural sector.
- Allowed the sales team to better plan customer site visits so that their time is used **more effectively** when they are out in the field.
- A robust follow-up process for ensuring **potential sales opportunities** aren't missed.
- The ability to **build knowledge and relationships fast** as the company expands internationally into new markets.

Contact Us

United Kingdom: **0845 268 0220**
Ireland: **0766 801 364**
Australia: **39 111 0500**
Switzerland: **043 508 2364**
Germany: **069 643 508 433**

United States: **866 873 2006**
South Africa: **0105 003 672**
France: **09 75 18 23 09**
Belgium: **078 483 840**
New Zealand: **0800 775 617**

orders@swiftpage.com

www.act.com

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