

# Case Study



## Industry

An integrated solid waste services company that provides waste collection, transfer, disposal, and recycling services.

## Situation

Hundreds of corporate-owned solid waste companies each with a salesperson or two who had their own level of sales skills resulted in an organization-wide lack of common sales language and a standard sales methodology.

## Solution

The company created a training department and sales “boot camp” centered on Professional Selling Skills®, and more advanced training using the Professional Sales Negotiations®, Negotiate Success<sup>SM</sup>, and the Strategic Selling® courses.

## Results

Early training allowed the company to identify those reps who were going to be successful and those who were not, alerting managers as to who would need extra coaching or even who might be better suited somewhere else. The training led to strengthened team bonds, which helped them lower their churn rate and build sales teams—key to selling large accounts. While the company’s bread and butter continues to be smaller accounts, they’ve been seeing success in selling more of the larger companies, with the Blue Sheet credited as the crucial element for closing large industrial accounts. By facilitating a much easier coordination of a sales team, the training program has given the company a better battle plan than it has ever had.

## Where are they now?

### Three-Part Training From Miller Heiman Group Helps Waste Connections Close More Accounts

Founded in 1997, Waste Connections, Inc. (The Woodlands, TX) is an integrated solid waste services company that provides waste collection, transfer, disposal, and recycling services, serving mostly exclusive and secondary markets. Waste Connections has grown rapidly through 350+ acquisitions of privately held solid waste companies throughout the U.S. This high-growth, fast-paced, and community-oriented company credits a strong decentralized corporate structure as the foundation for its success.

In 2011 the company created a training department under the direction of Steve Berry, Sales Training Manager for Waste Connections. Steve put together a sales “boot camp” centered on Professional Selling Skills® from AchieveGlobal and more advanced training using the Professional Sales Negotiations® course provided by AchieveGlobal and the Strategic Selling® course provided by Miller Heiman.

In 2014, AchieveGlobal and Miller Heiman became part of Miller Heiman Group, Inc. On whether the merger of AchieveGlobal and Miller Heiman had any effect on their training programs, Steve said, “No. We were actually ahead of time because we had chosen both AchieveGlobal and Miller Heiman back in 2011.”

Why did Waste Connections take the unusual step to choose both AchieveGlobal and Miller Heiman?

Steve explains, “I felt that AchieveGlobal had the best program for Professional Selling Skills®. We modified it to create our sales boot camp for the sales folks. Then came AchieveGlobal’s Professional Sales Negotiations® which we modified to become Negotiate Success<sup>SM</sup>. Lastly we selected Miller Heiman’s Strategic Selling®, which flowed seamlessly from the first two courses, even though it was from a different company at the time. We launched all three courses at the same time, and we’ve been using them since 2011. The merger was totally seamless. There was nothing that was affected.”

#### Boot Camp – Learning the Basics

According to Steve, “When we first started the training program, we had hundreds

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of corporate-owned solid waste companies, each with a salesperson or two who had their own level of sales skills. Our boot camp brought them all together and gave them a common sales language and a standard sales methodology.”

The boot camp also provided a very important and unexpected benefit. Steve says, “Because we trained people early on, we could identify high-performing reps who were going to be successful and low performers who were not going to be successful. That allowed us to advise their managers as to who would need a lot of coaching or who might even find something else for which they were better suited.”

When new sales reps go through boot camp, they receive formal training in the classroom and team building exercises outside the classroom, such as team laser tag. They participate in a variety of games that are associated with building a team. The team bonds become so strong that the reps request to come back in six or eight months with the same team members to go through the next class together. Steve says, “This really has helped us lower our churn rate and build sales teams, which are key to selling large accounts.”

David Hall, Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing, says, “Professional Selling Skills™ teaches sales reps to listen to what their customers are saying and what their needs are. I tell them, ‘If you get anything out of this course it’s listen to the customer. Don’t walk in and tell them what you think is going to be good for them.’ I can’t quantify how that translates to success, but our sales numbers are better than they were prior to starting the training.”

### Selling to Large Accounts

David says, “Our bread and butter continues to be smaller accounts, and that’s certainly what we want our sales reps to work on. I don’t think that our average customer has necessarily increased in size in the last four years, but what has changed is our success in selling more of the larger companies that are out there.

“When we teach Strategic Selling, we have the sales reps come in with specific customers in mind that they are targeting. We teach them to use Miller Heiman Group’s Blue Sheet during the training course. Then we have them go out and use the Blue Sheets with those accounts. We have a number of sales reps that followed-up with Steve saying, ‘I was able to close a large account using the Blue Sheet.’”

The Blue Sheet is the secret sauce for closing large industrial accounts. One sales manager closed a number of industrial accounts that in total size were more than the aggregate of all the other sales reps combined. He credited the Blue Sheet as the crucial element used in each one of those sales.

David Hall elaborates, “These accounts were closed by someone who knew that these sales opportunities - which ranged in size from \$20,000 a month to over \$200,000 a month - were complicated. I believe a fair amount of the team working these opportunities had gone through the Strategic Selling™ class. The Blue Sheets zeroed in on their working as a team to coordinate the sales cycle. That’s a very direct result of training.

“We’ve also included Strategic Selling™ to be part of the district management training. Even though they are not sales reps, they now use the Blue Sheet to help sell to large accounts. Our thinking was that the Blue Sheet could be expanded to the district manager level to go after large city contracts.

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“The training program has given us a much better battle plan than we’ve ever had. The coordination of a sales team is much, much easier because of the training. In the past, we may not have even considered the team concept. But now, we’ve seen the success of going in as a team and closing new sales.

“I’ve also heard very positive feedback from district managers who have said, ‘Wow, this concept of putting everything down in writing and creating a strategic plan is really a good program.’”

### Investors Like It, Too

David and Steve report that their training initiative played a very important part in the perceived value of the company. Steve says, “We were really surprised at a very high level when an investor team came to our company, sat down with us and other executives, and asked what type of training our salespeople receive. Their belief was that companies that invest in their employees will be much more successful than companies that don’t invest in their employees. It was an hour and a half session on exactly what we do and they came away very impressed with our training program. That was a very positive thing.”

Many companies have been cutting back on their training programs, even dissolving them, and going to online training. Steve says, “We have online training, too, but online is not the be-all and end-all of training. Trust me. It’s one-on-one training. Prospective sales reps recognize that, too. To join a company that has training really builds their love for and understanding of the company culture. That’s positive many times over for us.”

### Building Relationships

David says, “In boot camp, we explain to the reps that community involvement and relationships are extremely important. It’s all part of relationship selling. Supporting your local service club or getting involved in the clean-up-the-river project is all part of building strong relationships and building a positive reputation.

“We want our reps to get involved outside of the company, in the local community, and get a good reputation. We really do have a stellar reputation in the industry, and all that comes from the top down. We’re very proud of that. Some of these people are in small towns where they are the only salesperson and they don’t see the big picture all the time. The training courses help them get the big picture.”

### About Miller Heiman Group

Miller Heiman Group is one of the largest sales and service training companies in the world. Built on legacy brands such as Miller Heiman, AchieveGlobal, Huthwaite, Impact Learning Systems and Channel Enablers, Miller Heiman Group is backed by more than 150 years of experience and performance. Our Be Ready Solutions offer more sales- and customer service-based solutions than anyone in the industry, and empowers people across the entire organization to perform at peak potential by bringing game-changing insight to sales performance, customer experience and leadership. This allows you to build and sustain a successful, customer-focused organization that drives profitable revenue and top-line growth on a global scale. To learn more, visit our website. And follow us on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Google+.