CASE STUDY:

MARKET NICHE

Fine & Specialty Chemicals

POSITIONS NICHE

Marketing

JOB TITLE

Sales & Marketing Manager, NAFTA

CLIENT

Proviron
COMPANY
Proviron, Inc.

POSITION
Sales & Marketing Manager, NAFTA

LOCATION
Home-Based Office

For more information contact:
Robbie Ropella
President, Executive Search
Ropella
850-983-4883
Robbie@ropella.com
Proviron, Inc.

The Company

Proviron designs, produces, and markets specialty chemicals mainly for medium volume niche markets. They have 22 production units in three manufacturing plants, situated in Belgium and the US. For most of their own products, they have a market-leading position.

Proviron’s specialty chemicals are building blocks to a host of downstream products. They offer sustainable solutions for flexible polymers, waterbased paints and glues, feed ingredients, braking systems, runway and aircraft de-icers, and lots more. They have broken down activities into five mature markets and have identified four strategic development areas. Apart from this, a considerable part of the business is contract manufacturing, as this allows Proviron to try to maximize capacity utilization at the different plants.

The company’s goal is to present customers with a complete service package. They not only produce high standard specialty chemicals, including packaging and logistics, but they do also take care of quality control, technical service, and even research for product applications on the customer’s behalf.

Their 300 staff members are experienced, knowledgeable, and flexible, ensuring product quality and consistency. Their well-equipped R&D laboratory has highly skilled researchers offering both scientific knowledge and experience. Research, innovation and development are part of Proviron’s DNA.

Much of what the company does starts from a dialogue with customers. Innovative ideas go through lab testing and pilot installations before proceeding to industrial production.

More Information:
www.proviron.com
Rather than merely selling specialty chemicals, Proviron offers solutions. They are fast and flexible and offer sustainable solutions that are ecologically and economically sound, quality driven and that meet customer needs.

The History
Proviron was established in 1977 by Leo Michiels. It began as an engineering office called Proviron Engineering. It focused on the development of processes for environmental improvement; hence the name, PROcess and EnVIRONment. In 1984, Proviron started production with seven employees, focusing on the toll manufacturing of brake fluids and polyurethane additives (Proviron Industries).

In 1992, Proviron Engineering was sold to Technip. From then on, the office served as the basis for Technip’s activities in the Benelux. Proviron Industries continued its chemical operations. In 1996, Proviron acquired the UCB Fine Chemicals plant in Ostend. This resulted in the establishment of Proviron Fine Chemicals. Also in 1996, Proviron America Inc was established with a grassroots production site in Friendly (West Virginia). The site has parallel activities to Proviron Industries and is dedicated to the American market. Proviron America is also the North American sales, marketing, and logistics platform for Proviron’s fine chemical activities.

In 2000, a sulphur silanes production unit was built at the Ostend site. Silanes are used in energy-saving ‘green’ tyres. In 2001, Proviron took over Sisas’ phthalic anhydride activities in Ostend. The company also took over the site’s central services, which previously were operated by BASF. With this, Proviron acquired the whole Ostend site with the exception of the Huber activities. By the end of the year, the company employed about 350 people in total.
Over the years, Proviron continued to invest on all production sites. In 2007, Proviron finalized construction of the biodiesel reactor on the Ostend site. At the end of 2007, Leo Michiels passed control to his sons Wim and Mark Michiels. Wim was appointed CEO and Mark was put in charge of microalgae innovations. In 2008, Proviron Fine Chemicals was split into two entities: Proviron Functional Chemicals and Proviron Basic Chemicals. This change was linked to the strategy ‘to understand the functionality of our molecules better than our customers, and to become a truly global player in a limited number of product lines,’ whereas Proviron Basic Chemicals is only focusing on the production, sales and marketing of phthalic anhydride.

In 2011, Proviron CEO Wim Michiels signed a first agreement to open a Proviron office in the city of Hangzhou - China. Since August 2011 Proviron has actually been present in China where it is selling finished products as well as buying raw materials in Asia.

In the last six months, Proviron has invested over $5 million in the global development of the company. In Hemiksem, the runway deicer production capacity was doubled. A new aircraft deicer production plant was built in Oostende. And last but not least: a big investment in the toll manufacturing in Friendly, W.Va. meant a huge step change for the capacities and capabilities of the local plant there.

The 5 Primary Markets Served

- Polymer additives (mainly plasticizers)
- Functional Chemicals (monomers and solvents)
- Deicing solutions (deicers for runways and aircraft)
- Feed Ingredients
- Commodities (biofuel and phthalic anhydride)
The 4 Primary Strategic Focus Areas

- Micro algae
- Feed ingredients
- Biobased plasticizers for PVC
- Plasticizers for biobased plastics (mainly PLA)

The Values

- A safe working environment for the employees and the local community
- Respect for the environment
- High quality products and services
- No hassle, but speedy and flexible response to customers’ needs
- A flexible and open working environment, in harmony with the employees’ private lives
- Creative solutions taking into consideration the right balance between people, planet, profit and personal satisfaction
- Internal financial growth
Management Information

Stefaan Depecker

Stefaan is a very driven individual who is analytical in nature. He graduated from Vives University in Belgium with a Master’s of Science in Chemical Engineering and has a Master’s of Science in Environmental Engineering from Poytechnic University of Tampere, Finland. Additional studies include Executive Master class in B2B Marketing & Sales at Vlerick Business School.

Past work experience for Stefaan includes a mix of operational and general management roles at Proviron and Tessenderlo Group, including a stint in the US. His bull dog mentality (never let go until the desired/best solution is reached) has served him well and made him quite successful in all that he undertakes. Stefaan is globally minded (people and business alike), and keeps his finger on the pulse of global growth and expansion.

His decisions are made based on facts and figures, and clear target goals are given. While Stefaan is very analytical, he does also have a well-developed sense of humor and likes to mix business with pleasure. His management style is to properly coach and train an individual and then turn them loose to either sink or swim. Stefaan believes in letting people have autonomy, and if they run into an issue, then coach them through it.
Sales & Marketing Manager, NAFTA

Role
Proviron, Inc. is seeking a passionate sales professional with a proven track record of success in sales of specialty chemical products and solutions. This is an excellent opportunity to join a privately owned global company offering a competitive base salary, incentive, and benefit plan.

Responsibilities:
- Manage and further develop our existing NAFTA customer base and product portfolio.
- Achieve the agreed annual targets (volume, revenue and margin growth) and all the other qualitative objectives. The annual budget, sales and marketing strategy, sales development and sales management are your main tools to achieve this.
- Responsible for ensuring the continued development, implementation and communication of our business strategy.
- Introduce new concepts and products with existing and new customers.
- Develop strong relationships with key stakeholders in current and prospective customers, including plant or supply chain executives. All this requires frequent travel.
- Participate in trade fairs, conferences and seminars, in order to stay updated on trends, developments and opportunities in the market and translate these opportunities into business.
- Gather, analyze and interpret competition and market data, while sharing this info and ideas with the Product Development Managers.
- Report to the Commercial Director (based in Belgium) & work closely with multidisciplinary teams (R&D, Product Development, etc.).

Qualifications
- A Bachelor’s degree in Engineering (Chemical, Mechanical, Industrial) or Life Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, etc.).
- Ideal candidate will have a minimum of 7 years of experience in a business management role (preferably in a B2B environment) in the specialty chemical, plastics, composites, or chemical services sales or any related industry.
- Strong in customer relationship at all levels and have a “nose” for new business opportunities.
- Have a hunter/gatherer spirit, combined with a good understanding of business economics.
- Demonstrated sales or account leadership and a history of calling on multi-level plant or facilities management, and developing executive-level relationships.
- Definite team player, entrepreneur and communicator.
- Combine business acumen with excellent communication skills and outstanding organizational skills.
- Have a history of working in a field that required autonomy and self-motivation.
- Enjoy working in a “no nonsense” culture within a dynamic, flat structured company.
- Highly computer literate: able to work with Microsoft Office Suite and willing to learn internal business systems. Experience with ERP systems and Lotus Notes is a plus.
If you have open positions in your organization, give us a call and put our people and our process to work for you.

For more information contact:
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Skill Survey  
Sales & Marketing Manager NAFTA

Name:        Date:  

1. Outline University Degree(s):  
   (Please provide the Name, the Location, and the Phone Number of each Institution)

2. What is your total number of years in sales, marketing and business development roles  
   involving specialty chemicals? Which chemical products/lines have you sold or marketed  
   the most often and/or had the most success with?

3. Give an overview of your experience in industrial chemical sales? Please specifically  
   highlight experience selling plasticizers, stabilizers, and/or solvents for resins, coatings,  
   adhesives, inks or pigments.

4. Outline the territories that you have covered while in specialty chemical sales. Which  
   territories have you experienced the most success in and to what do you attribute that  
   success?

5. Provide an overview of major industrial specialty chemical customers with whom you have  
   developed strong relationships which have converted to sales.

6. Share at least 3 examples that demonstrate your ability to drive sales and significantly  
   increase customer base and/or market penetration and increase margins on existing  
   volumes to existing customers without business loss.

7. Describe an experience in a particularly difficult negotiation with a customer. What were  
   some of the roadblocks you encountered? What was the outcome?

8. Outline your experience working with global project teams, particularly where the team  
   members have not been your direct reports.
9. Share any experience you may have selling services such as toll/contract manufacturing.

10. What is your comfort level with travel? Do you have a maximum % level of travel or # of days/week away from home that you could sustain?

11. Tell us about any non-compete and/or employer restrictions that you may have. Please provide these documents for our review.

12. If asked one of the following questions during an interview, how would you answer? Why are you considering this opportunity? (or) What motivated you to consider a job change at this time?

**References**
Please provide three to six references. The first priority is past bosses, then employees, then peers.

**Example:** Bob Smith, currently - Business Director at ABC Corporation 412-123-4567, Email: bob.smith@abccorp.com. Was Business Director, my direct boss, while I was a Manager at ABC Corporation.

We will NOT contact any references until after completing the interview process and not without notifying you first.

1) 
2) 
3) 
4) 
5) 
6)
Our Candidate Scorecard is a form you complete on every candidate you have now screened as a potential fit. If you can tell that some of the candidates are probably C level in a superficial overview in comparison to others you set those aside now and grade the rest. The grading sheet will help you objectively weigh all the Must Haves and even the preferences in such a way that at the end of using the grading sheet process you can be pretty sure who the A plus candidates are, who the A candidates are, and who the B candidates are. Then we focus on scheduling for the A’s.

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**Candidate Comparison-Scorecard**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>A/B/C</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A = BS in Chemistry, Chemical Engineering or related</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B = BS in Business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C = BS/BA in unrelated course of study (psychology, basket weaving etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Total years applicable sales/mktg/BD exp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A = 7+ years</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B = 3-7 years</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = &lt; 3 years or no sales/mktg/BD experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Sales experience with plasticizers, stabilizers, and/or solvents for CASE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A = Extensive – successfully sold these product lines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = Average – have sold one of these products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = Little or no direct experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Territory Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A = NAFTA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B = United States</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C = Area in the US</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Customer Base</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A = Has relationships with many top companies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = Able to list a few companies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = 1 or 2 applicable customers listed</td>
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</tbody>
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**Candidate Name:** Proviron

**Position:** Sales & Marketing Manager NAFTA

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**Client Name:** Proviron

**Hiring Mgr:**

**HR Contact:**

**Grader’s Name:**

**Grade:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Business Development / Market Penetration ability</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A = Well defined example that demonstrates ability to grow business and penetrate new markets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = General answer showing understanding of and some success in business development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = No business development skills demonstrated</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Negotiation Ability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A = Good example demonstrating ability to negotiate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = General answer showing understanding of and/or some success in negotiation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = No negotiation skills demonstrated</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>8. Global Experience with project teams</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A = Extensive experience throughout career</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = Some experience in current or previous role</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C = Minimal or no experience</td>
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<tr>
<th>9. Comfort with travel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A = Wide open - Road Warrior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = Open to 35% - 50% travel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = Less than 35% travel</td>
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<tr>
<th>10. Work Limitations</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A = No non-compete or applicable nondisclosure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = Unenforceable non-compete or limited nondisclosure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = Non-compete and/or limiting Nondisclosure</td>
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<tr>
<th>11. Compensation: 100K to 125K</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A = 100K to 120K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = 80K to 100K or 120K to 130K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = below 80K or over 130K</td>
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</tbody>
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Grading Point System:
A’s = 4
B’s = 3
C’s = 2
Bonus Points = .5

Now add up the numerical value of each grade and then divide by the total number of grades

Total Points:  
Divided by 11 grades =  
Avg. Grade:  