

# How do you...

## Rise Above the Competition and Capture Market Share?

**When there's a revolutionary new product to launch, some companies are reluctant to invest time and money in traditional training methods, which have a history of lackluster results.**

So when Norske Skog Flooring sought to break into the competitive American marketplace just a few years ago with their newest product—a unique floor covering based on an interlocking mechanical system—the “usual” wouldn't do.

The company turned to Celemi for help in creating a learning process that later proved to have significant impact: flooring retailers who used the learning program reported a 50 percent increase in sales of the product over those who did not.

### **A new approach to the marketplace**

Under the brand name Alloc,<sup>™</sup> Norske Skog Flooring's newest innovation made it possible for anyone to lay a new floor quickly and easily with precision results—simply by snapping laminate boards into place.

But the company did not have a significant presence in the U.S. market. **They needed some way to distinguish themselves from the competition, and clearly communicate the features and benefits of a new product that did not fit into any standard flooring category.**

“We needed to demonstrate our long-term commitment to the industry, the revolutionary new features of our product, and our desire to help distributors and retailers sell the product” explains Claes Wennerth, president of the company's U.S. operations.

### **Making it work**

Working together, Celemi's Launches & Branding division created for Norske Skog Flooring a unique learning program designed to benefit everyone along the sales chain, from distributors and retailers to installers and estimators. The program was specifically designed to achieve two critical objectives:

1. Enable the company's sales force to demonstrate the features and benefits of their new snap-in flooring product to busy distributors, retailers, installers and others; and
2. Demonstrate their long-term commitment to the U.S. marketplace by offering store owners the opportunity to educate their own sales force, which would ultimately improve sales in all flooring categories.

The solution was a flexible simulation-based program with four components, each lasting about one hour. Throughout the simulation, participants are engaged in activities such as role-playing with a deck of customer profile cards to better understand customer needs and preferences; or matching the



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features of an Alloc floor to their related benefits; and even an opportunity to practice pricing and installing an Alloc floor. (For more details, please see “Stepping quickly into the U.S. market.”)

### The impact

“The beauty of the program is its flexibility,” comments Shane Calloway, a regional manager with Norske Skog Flooring. “We use it with distributors, retailers or installers, and adapt the program according to their specific needs and the time they have available.”

The program also helps set Alloc apart. “I haven’t seen anything else like it,” says Bill Baker, flooring manager with Acoustical Specialties in Louisiana, a Norske Skog Flooring client and Alloc distributor. **It helps us sell the product to our retail customers because it covers all the details, so we don’t forget key points. It’s a professional way to educate people, and that’s a benefit for us and the retailers.**

A survey conducted by Norske Skog Flooring about six months after introducing Alloc turned up the remarkable results of the program—a 50 percent increase in sales of Alloc for retailers who used the program versus those who did not.

After learning of these results, some retailers who initially declined the program decided to give it a try. A few months later, this “late start” group reported that sales of Alloc were 32 percent ahead of those who did not use the program at all.

“Retailers are reluctant to carry a product that can’t sell itself,” says Mr. Wennerth, “until they see the impact a knowledgeable sales force can have on their entire business.”

**Flooring retailers who used the Alloc Learning Program reported a 50% increase in sales of the product.**

### Stepping Quickly into the U.S. Market

The Alloc Learning Program features a set of four simulations, each lasting about one hour.

In the first simulation, participants work in small teams to analyze the nature of their own store environment and the customers they serve. Using a WorkMat™ (a highly visual, poster-size sheet), they discuss trends and characteristics of different flooring options like carpet, sheet vinyl, ceramic tile, hardwood and laminates. They compare product samples, and consider the buying habits and reasoning process of customers.

In this phase, participants “open the doors” to their own simulated retail store and “meet” customers who have general flooring concerns.

In the second phase, participants take a closer look at the features and benefits of Alloc. Participants analyze the product’s design features and match them to corresponding benefits—an engaging process that reinforces their new knowledge.

The third phase brings everything together. Sales professionals test their understanding of Alloc’s features and benefits and their customer service skills in an environment where mistakes won’t cost them a sale.

In a fourth phase, customized to reach floor-covering installers and estimators, participants plan project installations and develop price quotes for both Alloc and regular glued laminate flooring, and practice installation techniques.



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