

GALE ACCELERATE



From blank sheet of paper to
£1.9 million new revenue in nine months

WHY IT HAPPENED

Gale, one of the business units of Cengage Learning, had a problem. To hit yearly sales targets, they had become reliant on high-ticket sales closing in particular regions right at the end of the financial year. This was creating inconsistent cash flow, and putting a lot of pressure on staff.



While these deals had come in for the past few years, the board were very aware that it was not sustainable. There were a finite number of customers who could spend that kind of money, and they were going to have acquired all the product they needed within three to five years; so there needed to be high-ticket deals in multiple regions throughout the year.

Stabilising cash flow had been identified as strategic priority by the board, so I was tasked with leading a cross-functional team to solve this problem. We had some restrictions: we were not allowed to do an indefinite subscription product; we had to maintain a minimum 30% margin; and it had to provide at least £500k revenue each year.

There was one small issue: this had been decided a month into the financial year, so there had been no budget or resource allocated to it. It had to be created and managed completely in-house, and it had to fit into existing workloads.

WHAT I DID

Using the results of the market research I had introduced, and cross-referencing it with sales feedback, I identified the priorities it needed to address. They couldn't afford to buy all the products they needed, and they had inconsistent yearly budgets so they couldn't commit any money to guarantee future purchases. They needed a lot of the product quickly to help with student and staff acquisition and retention and improving the ever more important satisfaction scores.

So the pain points were speed of access, quantity of product, and manageable payment: on to the solution.

Working with sales, we decided that the best offer would be a customisable product package that gave the customer instant access to all the products they wanted, but they could pay the total purchase cost over three to five years (with a loyalty discount that still comfortably maintained a margin above 30%). To help them work with their inconsistent budgets, they would have the option to increase or reduce the number of products at the beginning of each 12-month period; and they could justify ring-fencing the money each year due to the impact it would have on satisfaction scores.



WHAT I DID

[CROSS-REFERENCED INTERNAL + EXTERNAL INFORMATION / CODIFIED TO IDENTIFY CUSTOMER PRIORITIES]



	PACKAGE BENEFIT	PRODUCT BENEFIT	GENERAL BENEFIT
1	Deans, Vice Chancellors (universi	Librarians (library)	Academics (faculty)
2			Students
3			
4			Student engagement / well-being
5	PROBLEM		Digital literacy at varying levels
6			
7	Campus of the future	Library of the future	
8			
9	Manage a tight budget		Students get best results
0			
1	Covering all subjects/areas		Thorough knowledge of subject area
2			
3	Prioritisation		Sources for dissertations
4			
5	Competition		Access to resources remotely
6			
7	Perception		Future job prospects
8			
9	Perceived value of degree	Perceived value of library	Authoritative and trusted content
0			
1	Reputation of the university		
2			
3	Produce world class research		
4			
5	Attract staff		
6			
7	Academic Standards		
8			
9	Raise their personal profile		
0			
1	Status amongst peers		
2			
3		Business case	
4			

WHAT I DID

I developed the positioning, which came in two levels. First was a more detailed positioning outlining the features and benefits for the various stakeholders, tied back to the priorities and concerns that had been identified in the market research; the second was the positioning used in any customer-facing activity. I called it Gale Accelerate as the initiative was about accelerating the customer's offering to their patrons, so it was both fitting and descriptive: the name described the outcome.

Even better, it was an industry-first package: no other company was offering anything like it, and we were first to market.

We decided that this would be an exclusive offer to selected target customers: ones who we were sure had the budget, we knew the right people to pitch it to, who had expressed a need for more product, and would be able to act on the offer quickly. If they passed the B.A.N.T. criteria, they would be eligible. We decided it would not be publicly advertised (largely due to the absence of any budget!), so I developed an account-based marketing (ABM) programme that covered pre- and post-sale activity.



WHAT I DID

[PERSONA-SPECIFIC AND PROMOTIONAL POSITIONING]



LIBRARY: SPEED UP ACQUISITION

Increasing your digital offering helps you deliver critical support to research, teaching, and learning. All of your users are on an intellectual journey. Whether they are researching, expanding their existing knowledge, create new knowledge, and present that knowledge, you choose the archives based on the needs of your users. You have access to a wide range of content, without straining on your budgets, without needing to compromise on other acquisitions. You can offer your users faster, and your users get the best results from them.

Purchasing archives separately can delay the support you can offer your users. It can be difficult to manage multiple payments. You can change the selection of archives at the start of each year, and in the middle of the year, make alterations, ensuring users have access to the archives they need most. To make budgeting easier, Gale Accelerate helps you reach your archive wish-list without having to aggressively compromise spend on other acquisitions.

Each library is different, and so are the demands from users. To make sure your users are supported, your representative will work with you to create a list suited to your users, and can help you prioritise departments or faculties in your spending. Gale Accelerate does not require you to make difficult choices. If you need it, this package helps you raise awareness of the archives you have and expand your collection.

For the past few years, Gale has sought out archives built around rare content, manuscripts, and historical documents from around the world, offering your users access to internationally located archives without the need to travel. Access to a large amount of broad, diverse material is central to expanding existing collections, making research simpler, and meeting the evolving expectations of learners. Without this, effective research is limited.

WHAT I DID

The pre-sale elements focused on sales enablement, providing the materials sales needed to pitch and close the sale; it included customisable presentations that could be easily adapted to each customer, samples of the post-sale offer, and curations of relevant content from the Archives Explored content marketing platform.



The post-sale elements focused on the ongoing service they received as a Gale Accelerate customer. They got customised webpages they could send patrons to, tailored training sessions and events throughout the year, and a pack of bespoke ambient digital and physical marketing they could use to promote their products internally to increase usage.

All of this could be done in-house and cost free, so it helped quick funnel conversion and delivered extremely good campaign R.O.I. as it was all return on no investment!

WHAT I DID

[CUSTOMISED ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING SUPPORT]



PROMOTIONAL SUPPORT

- Direct institutional link to the Gale Primary Sources platform
- Contacts and promotional support for post-purchase activity
- Quick link to usage guides and booking product training
- Digital promotional material for your new archives
- Links to technical support and usage analytics



£1.92 MILLION RECURRING REVENUE

18 CUSTOMERS
£125 AVG. DEAL VALUE

NINE REACTIVATED
DORMANT ACCOUNTS



The original target for Gale Accelerate was to gain £500k of new recurring revenue by the end of the first financial year, which was nine months away when the project started. That amounted to 4-5 customers at around £100k each.

By the end of the nine months, it had 18 customers totalling £1.92 million recurring revenue for the next three years. The average deal value was £125k, with none of them going below the minimum margin requirement.

There were also more accounts in the pipeline to join the following year, and it reactivated nine dormant accounts (who hadn't purchased anything in the previous five years) against a shadow objective of reactivating five.

The thing I'm most proud of with this project is how robust it has been based on its sustainability, consistency, and resiliency.

EPILOGUE

Since I left Cengage just over three years ago at time of writing, Gale Accelerate has continued to be one of the most financially successful initiatives they run. The sales lead I worked with has been promoted, it was successfully rolled out to the North American market, and continues to exceed the yearly revenue targets.



TOM ENGLISH

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES MANAGER | CENGAGE LEARNING



Kyle and I worked closely together in heading up a sales & marketing partnership to launch a new initiative across EMEA. Kyle's collaborative approach and keen insights enabled our two departments to work together like never before, yielding exceptional results. In quite short order the initiative has yielded in excess of £1.9m in recurring revenue and has since been rolled out in the north American market. I am particularly sad to see Kyle leave Gale. We've lost a prolific, highly valuable contributor who brought about real results for the business. He consistently overdelivered and will be missed by many.