

Arrow Electronics' PowerStart Program Is a New HP Reseller's Roadmap to Success

Program Opens the Door to Multimillion-Dollar Sales Effort for Florida Solution Provider

Being loyal to the product lines you sell is a good way to build a business. But when your customers tell you they want something more, it pays to listen. And Gulfcoast was listening. Located in Tampa Bay, Fla., Gulfcoast is a solution provider and wholly owned subsidiary of Relational Funding Corp., an integrated technology supply and finance company in Rolling Meadows, Ill. Gulfcoast already incorporated many of the industry's leading server and storage vendors and other third-party products in its solutions. But, as customer requests for HP products began to mount, Gulfcoast could see it was missing an important—and potentially lucrative—segment of the hardware market.

At its customers' request, Gulfcoast decided to diversify its product portfolio by adding HP products to its offerings. "Our customer base was looking for alternatives and we really wanted to make sure that we covered our customers on the HP side of the business," recalled John Medaska, Gulfcoast's vice president of business development. "HP seemed like the natural progression in terms of rounding out our product line."

Once the decision to become an HP reseller had been made, the company knew its biggest hurdle would be balancing its investment in becoming HP-authorized with its ability to quickly ramp to profitability on the HP hardware and services it planned to sell.

Since Gulfcoast already had a longstanding relationship with distributor Arrow Electronics, Englewood, Colo., the company turned to Arrow's SBM Division for assistance and guidance in getting authorized and up-to-speed on the HP line. "It was a very easy choice to go with Arrow," said Medaska. "The team they have, their overall professionalism, and the way they take care of their VARs really stands out to us."

Essentially, what Gulfcoast wanted was a roadmap to profitable HP sales, and Arrow has just the program: PowerStart.

PowerStart is designed to prepare resellers to successfully sell HP products. In its first 18 months alone, more than 250 reseller personnel representing over 65 reseller businesses were trained through Arrow's PowerStart program, which includes a rigorous set of business planning, demand creation, and product training programs all designed to help new HP resellers shorten their time-to-profitability.

"We designed the PowerStart program specifically to help our HP reseller partners reach outstanding success in selling the HP product line," said Charles McPherson, vice president of sales and marketing for Arrow's SBM Division. "It includes a number of unique training programs and tools that streamline the sales process for resellers, and the feedback participants have provided has been exceedingly positive."

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Vice President of Business Development
Gulfcoast

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Success Story

Arrow's PowerStart program is specifically designed to help new HP resellers like Gulfcoast ramp quickly by offering:

- A two-day PowerStart training class that consists of detailed, hands-on marketing and sales training on HP products and HP's SalesBUILDER for Windows (SBW) configuration tool, as well as Arrow's own order processing procedures and the contents of both HP's and Arrow's SBM Division Web sites. The class is free for the reseller.
- A relationship-building event that brings together executives from the reseller organizations that attended the training, Arrow management, and local HP channel representatives.
- A direct mail campaign offering pre-printed, customizable postcards sent to potential customers in the reseller's target market.
- A go-to-market plan developed in cooperation with Arrow that outlines the reseller's strategy in winning new HP business.

After investigating the program, Gulfcoast was impressed. So impressed that the reseller asked Arrow to conduct its two-day PowerStart training program on-site at Gulfcoast's Florida headquarters, training a group of 25 Gulfcoast sales managers, inside sales reps, and sales support technicians all at one time, in one place.

Following its PowerStart participation, Gulfcoast developed a go-to-market plan with a healthy first-year sales goal between \$3 million and \$5 million in HP sales. It also took advantage of Arrow's marketing services, sending 500 postcards to its targeted HP customer base, customized with Gulfcoast's logo, a brief description of its new HP product offerings, and relevant contact information.

For Gulfcoast, one of the most significant elements in the two-day PowerStart program was a hands-on training on SBW, HP's configuration tool which streamlines the configuration and quoting processes for resellers and their customers. "The tool they have for quoting and pricing product is the best that our experienced sales team has ever seen," said Medaska. "We began using the tool the very next day on large deals. In fact, we won a \$100,000-plus deal just two days after using this tool."

The configuration tool, Medaska said, is especially useful because it not only assists with initial sales, but opens the door to future sales. "The tool enables us to save customer configurations so that we can go back later and do technology refreshes and consulting for them. It allows us to proactively work with HP customers as long as 36 months after the initial sale. And it allows us to upgrade system memory and processors very easily."

Overall, Medaska and the entire Gulfcoast team were significantly impressed with Arrow's PowerStart program. "It really enables us to be more efficient when responding to customer needs," Medaska said. "Gulfcoast is very pleased with all the services and support we received from Arrow's SBM Division, from the executive management at the top to the inside sales-people. We had an excellent experience, and can see that Arrow is going to be the key to our success in the HP marketplace across the U.S."



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