

Selling in the New Normal

Wow, what a difference 60 days makes! Who would have ever thought our business climate would be where it is today looking back just a couple of months ago? The economy was rolling, the manufacturing sector was up, and the workforce employed. Now we have major OEMs shut down, labor force furloughed, laid off employees, and we are dealing with the unknown of how to re-enter the workplace safely and effectively. A lot to think about and even comprehend for small business.

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So, what does the new normal look like as we begin to lift the current “stay at home” measures and gradually turn the economy back on? These are all questions and topics we have wrestled with over the past few months as we continue to map a strategy and path forward. I think the first objective must be how can we keep our employees safe while traveling and carrying out everyday duties and responsibilities. We are of the mindset that personal protective equipment such as masks, hand sanitizer, and maintaining social distancing will have to be integrated into the very fabric of our professional lives.

Since face-to-face visits may be limited for the immediate future, one must be resourceful and implement the tools that we have available to us today. Video conferencing offers a way to engage one-on-one or as a group, have peer-to-peer discussions, and share insightful presentations to both customers as well as prospects. There are many platforms from which to choose, such as Zoom, Go to Meeting, Teams, and Join Me, just to name a few. Some offer their services free of charge and some require a monthly fee.

Email marketing can also be an effective way to keep your customers and prospects updated. Now is the time to inform your clients of their suppliers’ capacity,

any issues they might be encountering from the supply chain of material, the number of operating shifts, and general updates about the plant and how they are dealing with the pandemic. It helps the customer to understand how their suppliers are coping and reassures them that the plants have a strategy and can manage during these difficult times.

Reps must also be willing to adapt and look at new ways to grow. Sometimes from a difficult situation the need to adapt can open windows we might not have normally pursued. For example, we have a current manufacturer that supplies tier automotive custom foam products. When the automotive industry shut down completely mid-March, they quickly shifted their mindset to ways they could utilize their skilled workforce and help the community. Within a week they were up and running, producing PPE “face shields” that could be used by health care workers to stay safe. The need was great, and their forward thinking has helped many receive the much-needed support. This is not a typical product line for them but demonstrates how useful it can be when you are adaptive.

We are all in an unimaginable time, and it is safe to assume that this will be the “new normal” for some time to come. If we utilize some of the tools mentioned, it might serve to help weather the storm. It will not be easy, but progress can still be made. We can still be productive for our principals and help them to maintain market presence and grow market share. Manufacturers’ representatives are as important now as they have ever been. Manufacturers will depend on our efforts to help regain the momentum.

Tough times do not last; tough people do!



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