

Education Is a Two-Way Street

In the ever-evolving relationship between manufacturers' representatives and their principals, the need to educate one another remains vitally important.

Manufacturers educate reps on capabilities, quality systems, lead times, policies and procedures and best practices that they feel will assist the rep to be more successful in marketing and selling their respective lines. Do we ever stop to think about how important it is for reps to reciprocate this education back to the manufacturer?

Manufacturers should always consider their rep agencies as extensions of their business. The communication should be transparent, open and frequent, for the two sides are truly "partners" in business and should be perceived as such. It is incumbent upon reps who may feel they are not treated as a "partner" to express this need to the manufacturer. This is the founding principle for a successful rep-principal long-term and flourishing relationship. The rep needs to educate on this basis.

In our world, programs take time to develop and the expectations of the manufacturer and the customer do not always align. The rep needs to educate the manufacturer that the timeline of the customer can move and be fluid as engineering changes, prototyping, pre-production builds and myriad other launch conditions can arise. The manufacturer should remain engaged, communicative and supportive of the rep. It is up to the rep to educate the manufacturer throughout the process regarding customer needs and how to ensure success.

Support in a timely manner demonstrates to the customer that the manufacturer truly wants and desires their business. This means turning quotes in on time, meeting critical milestones in timelines and during production and meeting schedules and releases as set forth by the customer. If these tasks are not executed properly it will affect the credibility of the rep as well as that of the manufacturer or supplier. It will also serve to demonstrate to the customer what they can expect from the level of service and relationship over the long haul. The rep needs to educate the manufacturer on the importance of hitting commitments.

Manufacturers need to take a vested interest in the territory. This means making scheduled and well-planned territory visits so the customer feels that the manufacturer wants to learn about their business and products and support the rep and their ongoing efforts. Reps should educate their manufacturers on the importance of this face-to-face relationship-building best practice. Even in today's environment this can be achieved through virtual meetings.

In order to best market their principals, reps should educate the manufacturer on the need to establish current relevant print, social media, company presentations and electronic media. These should be concise, informative and convey the core competencies and overall capabilities messaging the manufacturer is trying to convey.

In summary, education is a two-way street. While we are all used to the manufacturer's side of the education process, let us not forget about what the rep can teach the manufacturer. Listen to each other; both sides bring value and work together to create a mutually beneficial relationship. When worked correctly, all parties benefit.



Tommy Garnett, CPMR, CSP, is president/CEO of Garnett Component Sales, Inc. GCS, headquartered in Wake Forest, NC, serves the OEM community by providing engineered mechanical component solutions. Garnett is a 27-year veteran of the manufacturers' representative business and small business owner.



MANA
Manufacturers & Agents
PROFESSIONAL PARTNERS IN PROFITS

Manufacturers' Agents National Association

Successfully connecting reps and manufacturers since 1947.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



John Davis
Chairperson of the Board
Paul Davis Automation, Inc.
Chardon, OH
(440) 285-9597
jd@pauldavisautomation.com



Keynae Agnew, CPMR
Agnew Pacific Enterprises, LLC
Aliso Viejo, CA
(949) 290-6035
info@agnewpacific.com



Tommy Garnett, CPMR, CSP
Garnett Component Sales, Inc.
Wake Forest, NC
(919) 801-4627
tommy@gcsrep.com



Charlie Ingram
Eriez Magnetics
Erie, PA
(814) 835-6000
cingram@eriez.com



Michelle Jobst, CPMR
Jobst Incorporated
Eden Prairie, MN
(952) 906-7600
michelle@jobstinc.com



Marnee Palladino
MARN, Inc.
Middlebury, CT
(203) 217-6433
mpalladino@marninc.com



Kenneth Russell-Murray
ElectraSpec, Inc.
Quebec, Canada
(450) 224-9726
kenmurray@electraspec.ca