

The Thinking Salesman Letter

July 1, 2011

Hello Everybody,

Al Brosseau, forty years identifying, setting up and administering distribution networks across the USA, Canada and Latin America as salesman, sales mgr., independent rep and now consultant.

Our Mission:

To openly discuss and challenge all aspects of sales and distribution and to promote the sales profession.

Al Brosseau,
Former President, ALBRO Export & Marketing, Inc.
Former CSI (Vermont chapter) & CDT
CPMR (Indiana U., 2003)
MANA board of directors (2002 to 2007)
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On the Firing Line

A Rep who wishes to remain anonymous -and as always we respect- sent us the following rather insightful and we think, proper "back-of-the-envelope" comments:

"I just returned from a show where for the first time in forty years I was the customer walking the isles as opposed to working the booth. The show was the annual NRA convention and mfr. from around the world where there and 70,000 people in attendance.

The reason I am writing this note is to say that as I made my rounds I could not help notice the reps in attendance. Not that this was unusual but almost to the person they were dressed in suit and tie while the factory people wore logoed shirts. Now this may not seem unusual but considering the type of show they were totally over dressed and out of place, (they looked like prima donnas).

In as much as I am an avid hunter and shooter I attended with a very specific agenda with a number of problems I wanted to resolve with some of the mfr. As a rep I naturally gravitated to the attending rep in the booth. Man did I get my eyes opened with the lack of knowledge some of these guys had. In almost every instance. I was referred to the factory person.

Al, I am beginning to see why some mfg. get down on reps. I made mention of the fact to one of the factory people and they said, well you have to understand these guys rep in number of different companies and do not have the information we have. Holy smokes, if a rep is not

an expert on your product who the hell needs them?

Al, after putting in forth years as a mfg.'s rep I have to tell you I was absolute shocked and disappointed"

And our contributor sent us a follow up email:

"I was thinking about my comments and I think a good point to make regarding my experience is that there must be a breakdown in communication between factory and rep. What I mean is if I asked my rep to be in attendance at this show I would have laid out the ground rules as to what I expected of them including how they dress unless the factory did not give a damn."

Mfrs and Reps don't communicate properly. One looks down on the other and the other views communication as an invasion of his "independence". This is MAD! MAD for "Mutually Assured Destruction".

Mfrs should have an outsider review their rep agreement and approaches especially if things are not working as well as expected.

Sales Meetings II Rep Councils I

A big **THANK YOU** for contributing to this article to:

Bill Leon of Design Sales Assoc.,

Bill's web site is at: www.designsales.com
and

Harry Abramson of Electronics Salesmasters.

who wrote "**The Perfect Rep Council**"

The full article is available at:

TheThinkingSalesman.com under Commentaries

Harry's web site is at: www.salesmasters.com

Manufacturers who use Reps and don't have a Rep council are using only a fraction of their business potential.

What Rep councils are:

- Rep councils consists a few Reps who represent the whole Rep network and a few top executives from the Principal for the purpose of discussing marketing, product and contract issues common to all.
- Principal should look at their Rep council as an advisory board.

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What Rep councils are [NOT]:

- NOT bargaining units.
- NOT to discuss individual situations.
- NOT to replace sales meetings and territory visits.

Purposes/Advantages:

- Cut through management layers.
- Because of the smaller group, bring quicker resolutions.
- Principal's management learns about their markets and their representatives.
- Better exchange of ideas and action plans.
- Maximize Rep and customer support in order to increase sales.
- Identify new compatible Reps.

Who sits on the Rep councils?:

From the Principal's side:

- A few top executives; those who can make on the spot decisions. Remember the objective is to cut through management layers for quick resolutions.

From the Rep side:

- One Rep representing 4-5 others is a good rule of thumb. They can either be elected or the Principal invites the 3-4 top producers.

Subjects of discussion:

All subjects common to all Reps such as:

- Commissions and split commissions.
- Rep agreements.
- New products and marketing strategies.
- Support programs and training.

Rep Councils Cont'd July 15th. 2011

MANA also has a excellent bulletin on Rep councils:
A Powerful Tool For Mfrs and Their Agents.
visit www.manaonline.org & go to Publications

Whisky Tango Foxtrot Moment

The Ugly Canadian?

Let's open up a real can of worms here.

One of the services we offer are rep searches. More often than not our clients are Canadian companies expanding into the USA. Part of our service -once we have identified a potential Rep- is a telephone interview and we like to clearly identify our client's right from the start i.e. who they are, location etc.. So far, in 100+ searches we were told, right at the start, by four Reps [One is a Canadian living in the USA] *We won't touch Canadian Companies.* And we've heard the same from too many fellow Reps in the field i.e. *"Canadian companies can't be trusted" or "They cancel you when things start rolling".*

We have met and worked with several excellent Canadian Principals however, we must also admit we have run into our fair share of duplicitous individuals more interested in "obtaining the Rep's customers names" than working with the Reps. This is one more reason for Reps to do due diligence before signing up new Principals on either side of the border but also for serious Manufacturers to show up with fair rep agreements and long term support programs eh?

Thought:

"It is necessary for us to learn from others' mistakes.

You will not live long enough to make them all yourself."

Admiral Hyman G. Rickover

Next issue, July 1, 2011,
Rep Councils II

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