

The Thinking Salesman Letter

July 15, 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)
www.TheThinkingSalesman.com

From the "Firing Line"

(I swear none of this stuff is made up)

Last January, a contributor of ours suggested we put a former Principal of his on our mailing list. Her title is "Rep support & development specialist".

To our surprise, six months later, especially with the title she has, she asked to be removed from our mailing list and we did. However, out of curiosity, we called her to find out why she's lost interest our newsletter.

The conversation went like this:

She answered with the most charming voice until I identified myself.

- *I then asked her if she could give me a few minutes of her time.*
- *She answered: "I'm quite busy, can we do this some other time?"*
- *I answered "Sure, what's a convenient time for you?" "I'm just curious as to why you cancelled your subscription to The Thinking Salesman?"*
- *Answer, "We can do that right here, it's not applicable".*
- *I asked "Isn't you title Rep support and development specialist?"*
- *She answered "No" and hung up.*

We visited that Mfr web site. We noticed the following:

- There are no direct links such as email to reach the executives. Although they show the names,

the emails buttons direct you to a form addressed to a generic, sales@-----.com
- None of their Reps names or how to contact them appear on their web site.

We're beginning to think we may have identified two red flags Reps should look for before accepting to represent a Manufacturer:

1. If a Mfr does not list their Reps with their emails and telephone numbers
2. If the executive are not directly available chances are they are control freaks looking to recruit any Reps and preferably desperate ones they can control.

Sales Meetings Rep Councils II

A big **THANK YOU** to contributors of 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**"

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

The full article is available at:

TheThinkingSalesman.com under Commentaries

Part II of:

What's needed for successful Rep councils

On the Principal's part:

- **Willing to listen, to dialogue.**
- **Open to controversy, even criticism.**
- Participation of top management.

On the Reps' part:

- A clear agenda set by ALL.
- Must have the time to devote and be good at communicating.
- Must have the full confidence of ALL Rep firms.
- Be discreet. Confidential information might be revealed and should be kept confidential. Caveat, sitting on a Rep council is a demanding job therefore no Rep should be on a council for more than 2, maximum 3 years. Also make sure the selection of members is staggered and the membership rotates on the Council to assure continuity.

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On everybody's part:

- Keep the number of people as low as possible.
- Keep them short, a day to a day and a half.
- No more than one meeting a year (New councils may consider meeting twice in the first year)
- Make sure there's somebody "in charge of implementing the decisions reached during the meetings.
- Expeditious distribution of the minutes to all including the Reps who are not attending the council. Note: we highly recommend that a Rep be appointed secretary (minute keeper) or, at least, co-chairs the secretary position.
- Provide written updates and bulletins on progress accomplished. It shows the council is working.
- Regular conference calls with all

Who pays and where?

Rep councils are working sessions, they are not social events, make every minute count. Golf and resorts hotels should be reserved for sales meetings

- The more effective tend to be held at the Principal's factory.
- Traditionally the Principal pays for all travel expenses

How to fail a Rep council:

- Treat Reps as employees.
- Attempt to control the council.
- Discourage candor.
- Don't communicate fully and promptly with those who are not on the council.

The August issue of MANA's **Agency Sales** magazine will be devoted to Rep councils.

Whisky Tango Foxtrot Moment

Why "*The Thinking Salesman*" newsletter? I firmly believe in sales and the sales profession. I also believe in transparency, questioning, irreverence and I don't mind standing alone.

Also, I'm on my own now. I spun off part of my company and dissolved its charter. I have no hidden agenda and I'm no longer a member of any association except for maintaining my CPMR accreditation. I don't owe anybody anything.

This creates a unique opportunity. I can raise irreverent questions, challenge sacred cows and call a spade a frigging shovel. In addition, the newsletter offers another platform to highlight industry and profession-wide problems, help bring solutions to these problems and encourage "out of the box" thinking.

I've been told my initiative has not been welcomed by all. To control freaks, status quo side liners, communication paranoids, group thinkers and all those who have problems with scrutiny, transparency, challenges and/or outside ideas I say "You're the very reason why *The Thinking Salesman* newsletter is around".

Thought:

Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it's time to pause and reflect.

Mark Twain

Next issue, Aug. 1, 2011.

The Different Types of Sales Mgr.,
Part 1. The Pro Reps, The Dinosaurs

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