

The Thinking Salesman Letter

October 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

On the Firing Line

*(None of this stuff is made up,
the names may have been omitted to protect the guilty)*

From Tom Hayward of United Sales Associates (www.unitedsales.com) re our Oct. 1, 2011 issue on promoting ourselves to other Manufacturers. Tom is on the MANA board of director. Btw, I just love the initials of his corporate name... which are not a coincidence.

One item of clarification regarding the October 1 issue. You say "a rep should never, never approach a manufacturer who is represented in his territory." I am assuming that you mean to not proactively engage in conversations regarding representation of a company who is currently being professionally represented by an independent mfg. representative. The point being- "don't go after a line that is currently being professionally handled by a rep". The distinction of my statement being two fold. First, if you plan on continuing to be in business, your strategic prospects should know you/your agency very well regardless of how they currently go to market. There is nothing wrong with prospecting and networking. Poaching is the no-no. Secondly, that if anyone (including a mfg. rep) represents a mfg. in an unethical/irresponsible manner, then they are fair game. The situation that I am thinking of in the latter statement is that the rep is clearly competing against a line in the same territory- whether with another manufacturer or by bringing in their own products.

Agreed, Tom, we should have used the word poaching as this is what we're against.

Upstream promotion To Principals

In the last two issues we wrote about how Reps should promote themselves better to their Principals. Here's an example of a promotional letter a Rep sent to his Principal (we only made changes to his letter to make it more generic)

It is important to __(name of your firm)__ that its sales representatives are knowledgeable of the manufacturers and products that they represent and sell. It is equally important that each individual sales representative at __(name of your firm)__ is knowledgeable of the relationship between the manufacturers that we represent, their sales managers and we as an independent manufacturers' representative.

We support the concept of continuing education in sales and marketing for all of our sales and marketing staff. We accomplish this through:

Examples:

- *MRERF (Mfrs Rep Educational Research Foundation.*
- *The CSI (Construction Specification Institute)*
- *The DHI (Door and Hardware Institute)*

We are members of these associations and we encourage our field personnel to take their programs and use the educational resources available from manufacturers' agents associations especially those that are industry specific.

We also support and attend the annual _____ conference_____ and participate in their sales and marketing programs. Note, we do NOT believe subscribing to the "Sales and Marketing Book of the Month Club" is continuous education.

The following organizations have programs that provide education, resources and support to both manufacturers who use in house reps and independent manufacturers' representatives.

Examples:

- *MRERF, through their CPMR program is one of the best program Reps can join.*
- *The CSI, offers continuous education through their CDT and CCPR (Certified Construction Product Rep) a must for those in the construction industry.*
- *The Thinking Salesman newsletter which challenges all aspect of distribution channels.*

I hope that you will visit the web sites below and consider the continuing educational programs in sales

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and marketing that are available for both manufacturers and manufacturers' reps.

I personally want to thank you for choosing to use multiple line independent sales representative companies.

Best Regards,

List the web site of the organizations you mention in your letter.

Thanks to Carroll Hollingsworth, CPMR of D H Marketing for his contribution to this letter.
www.dhmarketing.biz

Exhibitions

Years ago, exhibitions, especially the large "national" industry wide ones used to be an essential part of the promotion program of anybody worth anything. If you weren't part of the "national" exhibition, you weren't even "in the game".

However, in the last, say 10 years, companies became more focused on results, considered the cost of these exhibitions vs. the possibilities the Internet offers and shied away from exhibitions.

Some say the internet killed the exhibitions. As Mark Twain put it, this is greatly exaggerated". Please go to:
http://www.canontradeshows.com/expo/mdmonline11/exhibit_interest.html

You'll see how some exhibitions have harnessed the power of the internet to their advantage, where - after paying an Internet entrance fee - an attendee can virtually visit the exhibition from the comfort of his/her office.

Now, if Reps and our associations could adapt and change like the exhibition industry...

An old salesman is sitting at a bar after a long day when a young bushytailed salesman jumps on the seat next to him and says:
- I've made a lot of good contacts today.
The older salesman answers back:
- I didn't sell anything either.

Whisky Tango Foxtrot Moment

Let's say you're on an airplane and somebody sitting next to you asks: "What do you do?" How many of us would proudly answer "I'm a salesman". I bet not too many.

Heck, some professions don't have the best reputation either but, lawyers for instance, do not hesitate to tell you "I'm a lawyer" or politicians, "I'm a politician". Sales people won't even admit they're sales people; instead we answer something like "I'm a marketing manager" or a "technical associate". We seem to have a lower opinion of ourselves than the general public has of lawyers and politicians...

However, on the morning of October 6, 2011, while checking the Globe & Mail (a major Canadian newspaper) I saw the following headline:

"Born salesman, Steve Jobs mixed tenacity with technical brilliance".

If being called a salesman is good enough for Steve Jobs there's no reason on earth for each and every one of us when asked "What do you do?" to proudly answer: "I'm a salesman".

Thought:

"Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become."

Steve Jobs

Next issue, Nov. 1, 2011,

Developing/Exploiting territories.



Classified on page 3

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CONTRACT SALES REPRESENTATIVES

Our client, de La Fontaine, Inc. is a 40 year old, well financed, Division 8 manufacturer with an excellent reputation for service and innovation.

Our Client wants to associate itself -either through **SALES AGENCIES** and/or **INDIVIDUALS**- with a down to earth, practical and hands on sales person for its already well developed Mid-Atlantic state territory (South Jersey, East PA, DL, MD, DC area).

The individual **MUST** be thoroughly versed in the Division 8 industry, be a lean self-starter with a proven record in developing new customers and maintaining long term relationships with all customers. He must be an excellent communicator, pleasantly aggressive and quality and service-oriented (vs. price). Exceptional customer and technical support are provided.

Our Client is interested in hearing from both **SALES AGENCIES** and **INDIVIDUALS**:

SALES AGENCIES who have such an individual on staff or know of such an individual whom they could entice to join their agency. de La Fontaine, Inc. already has excellent working relationships with top notch agencies and is open to help defray the agency's costs of bringing in such an individual.

INDIVIDUALS meeting the above criteria and seeking direct employment. If applicable, de La Fontaine, Inc. will contribute to the relocation costs of such an individual and offers above average terms, conditions and incentives.

For more information on de La Fontaine please visit: www.delafontaine.com

Contact, in absolute confidence:

The Thinking Salesman
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Tel.: 800-335-5275

We will be available for initial and confidential meetings at the DHI exhibition in New York.

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