

Thriving through mutual respect, collaboration and partnership

Building on the theme of “Why Reps,” I had the opportunity to meet with Phillip Gerard, the vice president of sales and general manager at C&K Components Americas. Founded in 1928, C&K is one of the world’s most trusted brands for electromechanical switches. Throughout its history, C&K has used manufacturers’ representatives as its field sales partners. Phillip helped articulate the value proposition of reps and how C&K has benefited by engaging with reps as its go-to-market partners.

Access and influence

Simply stated, Phillip notes, the C&K rep firms have more “touches” with C&K’s customers in their territories because of C&K and its other, complimentary lines. The reps are influencing designs at stages other than where a decision for C&K product may be made. With this early involvement, the reps have insight to projects in some cases well in advance. The C&K reps have access and influence across the key marquee customers and emerging customers. The “pull through” this yields benefits all the reps’ principals and creates a more substantial, influential relationship with the customers in the market.

Enabling and support

C&K focuses on training and support to enable its field sales representatives although some, Phillip noted, know more about C&K products than many C&K employees due to their tenure of service. That long-term relationship serves not only C&K, but its customers and channel partners. The historic knowledge of C&K, its products and customers all serve to build the “trusted partnerships” for which C&K strives. The scope of the reps’ relationship with the distributors in the market is much more substantial than that of C&K alone. Complimentary training, prospecting and joint account planning with distributor partners are far more in depth than what could be with C&K alone. C&K enables the distributor sales

managers at the rep firms with the tools they need to support these efforts.

Customer reach

Manufacturers’ reps have solid, well-entrenched sales teams in the market. While it is recognized that the coverage measure is on a full-time equivalency basis, it still stands to reason that the rep sales organization will simply touch more customers or potential customers than C&K could without them. This is where Phillip feels C&K has a responsibility to identify the markets which C&K wishes to penetrate and

What struck me most from my time with Phillip was the very strong sense that C&K views its reps as an extension of its team and, as C&K grows and evolves, it does so in partnership with its field sales force — manufacturers’ reps.

has a formal and disciplined approach to lead generation, market identification, opportunity tracking, transfer business compensation and the creation of tools/collateral to focus the rep team where both can win. This creates what Phillip calls a “purpose built” sales force versus a “spray and pray” approach.

Evolving together

What struck me most from my time with Phillip was the very strong sense that C&K views its reps as an extension of its team and, as C&K grows and evolves,

it does so in partnership with its field sales force — manufacturers’ representatives. No surprise then that, based on this spirit of mutual respect and collaboration, C&K continues to outpace the market and its competitors as it thrives together WITH manufacturers’ representatives!

Hats off to the C&K representatives who, through their excellence, raise the bar for the entire rep community: **AKI, Crowley Associates, Conley Associates, Control Sales, Ewing Foley, GMA, Hannah Lind, Interep, Ion Associates, Kruvand, Luscombe, Millennium Alliance, Spectrum Marketing & Spectrum Sales.**

And thanks to Phillip Gerard and C&K for their longstanding partnership with manufacturers’ representatives!

Note: ERA member firms are highlighted in bold text.



by David Norris
Norris & Associates, Inc.
ERA President
e: dnorris@norrisrep.com