

Ecommerce and manufacturers' reps ensuring success after the first 'click'

It seems every five years or so there is an event or evolutionary market occurrence that completely changes the landscape of how we sell to or connect with our customers. From digitization to Cloud-based information access and storage, technological advancements continue to appear limitless.

Those of us who have been a part of the electronics industry for the past 30-plus years — whether a manufacturer, manufacturers' rep or distributor — can relate to these events, and how we have had to adjust our business models to survive and thrive in this rapidly changing environment.

From a sales perspective, I would classify ecommerce as one of the most impactful events. How we purchase everything, including electronic components, is driven by the proliferation and enhancement of this go-to-market process.

For the design engineers, it has opened a veritable treasure trove of access to products and technologies supporting their design efforts. For the manufacturers, the potential to capitalize on the growth ecommerce offers, by building on the manufacturers' rep/distributor collaborative selling effort, is just as significant.

For sure, the naysayers are out there shouting: "The end for field sales is near. And all the millennial engineer requires is a computer with no need for any personal interaction to complete his or her design." This is tantamount to saying, "Who needs doctors when you have WebMD?"

As a manufacturer or distributor, the value of your ecommerce initiative is not complete until you have ensured that your customer's experience is optimized. The most effective way to do that is with a manufacturers' rep being part of your total offering.

Most ecommerce initiatives are focused on speed of response and accuracy, which is obviously critical to success, but it doesn't

end there.

Where the manufacturers' rep adds the next level of value is enhancing the customer's productivity with solid technical support, application guidance and the synergistic lines that will provide the customer's engineer a single local point of contact — a point of contact, or a trusted advisor, who truly adds value to the design effort and no doubt will be called in on future designs.

Productivity cannot be overstated when it comes to enhancing the customer experience. It translates into real bottom line benefits for his or her organization. Bottom line benefits are realized by the manufacturers as well when they have a manufacturers' rep investing time on the front end of a design that may not realize revenue in the short term. The manufacturers' rep also is there to "protect" the business from the inevitable competitive attacks that will be coming.

The combination of having an easy-access ecommerce site supported by the collaborative selling effort of a manufacturers' rep, teaming with a distribution partner that's supplying quick turnaround product, is a powerful tandem. This combined effort will drive growth for the manufacturer and distributor by providing a valuable, productive and sustainable resource for the customer.

ERA has proven to be the ideal catalyst to facilitate the rep-distributor engagement on behalf of the manufacturer. ERA has an ongoing focus on ensuring its rep and expanding distribution membership are on the forefront of sales technology, collaborative selling methods and market trends. This will serve to ensure its manufacturer members have access to the best selling practices and processes, not only today, but for whatever the next evolution of reaching and serving the global customer base will be tomorrow.



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