



Practicing A One-Stop Approach In Canada

While it's "one-stop shopping" that is the goal of savvy shoppers, it's "one-stop" service that has allowed All Star Marketing Services, Inc., Bedford, Nova Scotia, to stand apart from the competition.



Arthur F. Pittman, president of All Star Marketing Services, Inc.

In addition to representing product lines for the building supply and industrial sales markets, All Star Marketing has carved out a niche for itself as the full-service provider for U.S. firms looking to make their mark in the Canadian marketplace. Among the services the 16-year-old MANA-member firm provides are:

- Sales
- Shipping
- Warehousing
- Invoicing
- Banking
- Bill paying

According to Art Pittman, who heads the agency, the full-service concept was put to work to increase its value-add to many

of the U.S.-based companies who face the traditional challenges of bringing products to market in a country other than their own. "Here's the challenge for any rep," explains Pittman. "You take a manufacturer's products from zero sales to the point where you're now making a good commission on your efforts. Then, since you're so successful, the manufacturer feels that the time is right to take the product direct and eliminate the rep. Not everyone does that, but I've been fired enough to realize that it does happen. To combat that trend, we do more than sales, and we let manufacturers know exactly what it is we can do for them. We will actually set up a home base in

Canada for U.S. companies. We'll operate a Canadian division for them where we'll do everything from shipping to warehousing, invoicing, etc. By doing that, we've found that it's a lot more difficult for someone to part ways with us."

Evolving Over Time

Pittman hardly arrived at this concept overnight — rather, it's something that developed over the years. "Previously, I was a manufacturer before I sold my company 17 years ago. I immediately started repping in the paint store industry — everything in the store except paint — and it's something I've been doing ever since. I'll admit that I pretty much starved for the first four-and-a-half years. We struggled from the very beginning, but I had a lot of contacts in the business and eventually all those contacts paid off. After that initial tough period we turned the corner and began to expand to where we are today." Today, All Star Marketing has five people serving the needs of eastern Canada and 12 for central and western Canada.

Pittman's philosophy of providing full service has paid dividends for his agency, the principals he represents, and the customers to whom he sells. "We're paid extra for the extra services we offer," he

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explains. "We have separate contracts for those services and charge an hourly rate. In return, the U.S. principals gain an immediate Canadian presence. Those manufacturers don't have to buy or rent an office or office equipment, and there's no need for them to have stationery, business cards, etc. Everything they need to get the job done is supplied by us; and perhaps most important, they don't have to supply any manpower — that's our job, too.

Pittman notes that his company is completely computer-oriented, guaranteeing full communication with its principals. "We'll also set up 800 phone numbers in their company name to better serve customers."

Currency Transactions

"In addition, we'll convert all transactions into Canadian currency. Once the transaction is

completed, we'll convert back to U.S. dollars and send the money on to them. Or, we can actually set up an account for them." He continues that the benefit of All Star Marketing handling currency matters is that "typically what happens when a U.S. company receives payment in Canadian currency, the funds can be held in excess of 60 days — thereby creating a negative cash flow. That's all eliminated when we enter the picture. We provide U.S. companies with instantaneous cash flow. We'll provide them with a total balance each month, showing sales, a breakdown of sales activities and all their costs. All of these services allow the companies to operate free-of-worry about taxes, bonds for deposit with the federal government, and a variety of forms that have to be completed. It's a completely worry-free relationship which solidifies their position in Canada and our position with them." □

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