
Attributes Of Top-Performing Reps

The first two articles in this month's *Agency Sales* detail how important it is for today's independent outsourced sales professional to be constantly at work to raise the bar of their professional performance. In the past, we've profiled agencies that have achieved that goal through continued education, affiliation with professional associations, and realizing the benefits of peer networking. In the first article we describe how important it is for reps who want to succeed in new ventures to be able to present themselves as top performers. What follows are some of the attributes that will set one rep firm head and shoulders above the competition.

If today's independent rep needs any reminder of the need to constantly strive to raise the bar of professional performance, a conversation with Dave Martin should meet that need.

Martin, Accu-Mold, Inc., Portage, Michigan, a member of the United Tooling Coalition (UTC), offers a virtual menu of performance parameters that the successful rep of today, and certainly the rep of tomorrow, should strive for.

But before we partake of that menu, a few words of description are needed to understand what UTC (www.toolingcoalition.com) is, and how and why it

desires to work with an outsourced sales force.

In information provided by UTC to describe itself, the organization says, "Ten of Michigan's premier tooling shops have come together to form the United Tooling Coalition. All told, the 10 shops have extensive capabilities for engineering, prototype, tooling construction and tryout for a full range of progressive dies and molds."

According to Martin, "UTC is a new way of doing business, and its way of doing business will involve and affect reps.

"We have aligned the 10 most elite stamping die and plastic injection mold shops together to form UTC. We are working together with each shop, having different specialties and sizes so that we may win projects that we normally couldn't win independent of one another. The customer gets one-stop shopping and accountability on large-scale assemblies such as instrument panels and all related parts."

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Mission Statement

Describing the goals of UTC in a slightly more



The members of the United Tooling Coalition understand the value of working with reps.

formal manner is the coalition's mission statement: "UTC's mission is to offer broad 'multifaceted' tooling support to North American companies that exceeds customer expectations and is superior to other competitive alternatives when evaluated from a total cost perspective.

"When working within UTC's structure, member companies will offer synergistic cost savings advantages, and develop long-term performance improvements with their customers."

According to Martin, after forming the coalition, UTC's next step was to join MANA and add representation. "We are looking for highly technical and sophisticated rep firms that want to be a part of this new way of business. The rep firms chosen will represent UTC and pursue multimillion dollar projects without having to put 10 companies together."

He adds that the rep business model of going to market was decided upon after they completed an economic study comparing a direct vs. an outsourced

sales force, ultimately agreeing on the outsourced sales method.

Martin explains that not all the shops comprising the coalition have a background of working with reps,

nor were they all aware of MANA. “I used my background of working with reps to make a presentation to the group. We were made aware of MANA through one of the association’s members who provided us with MANA territorial mapping information, which was just what we were looking for.”

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Identifying Rep Attributes

To approach and secure those “multimillion dollar projects,” UTC has obviously cast its lot with both MANA and independent reps — but not just any reps. Here’s just part of what Martin says the coalition is looking for:

- Multiple Companies, Multiple Lines — “Perhaps the number-one attribute of the type of rep we’re looking for now — and will be looking for in the future — is that they do more than represent an individual company,” Martin explains. “What they’ve got to do in order to attract our attention is show they are representing a multiple collection of companies that complement each other.”
- Synergistic Lines — Martin acknowledges, as many have before him, that in order for reps to perform

the best possible job for their principals, “An agency must focus on a collection of complementary lines. Customers want assemblies these day, and the rep has to be able to provide the answers to their questions and solutions to their problems.

“Right now I’d say our coalition is a little like a football team. The members of our team are all different sizes and shapes, and that’s what we’re looking for in our reps. As we move down field with the obvious goal of scoring, we will need people who represent lines that can feed off each other and perform a variety of functions. The reps we’re looking for have to go beyond just offering ‘x, y and z’ to their customers. Our reps will need to provide ‘a through z.’”

- Technologically Savvy — Martin continues, “Our reps will have to be technical in nature. We want them loaded with an engineering capability so they can act as consultants for their customers. They must have, and know how to use, their own software in order to access customer inquiries and know how to respond to them.”
- Vertically Integrated — “In order to be effective for their principals,” Martin continues, “the rep must know everything there is to know about the companies they represent. They must possess that knowledge so they can present the best solution for opportunities they encounter. In order to gain that knowledge, they must be vertically integrated with their principals and the markets they serve. We don’t want to just ‘shoot and ship.’ Our goal is to be a quality provider for our customers. That’s why it’s critical for the rep to know about everything that’s going on with us. Value-added only happens when the rep knows about our infrastructure, how we manufacture, and any changes that are implemented. They only reach that point by being vertically integrated with us.” □