
Reps Target Market For Remington

Part of MANA-member E. John Fetterolf's appreciation for what one of his principals has accomplished with its rep sales force grows out of the fact that he knows exactly how tough a job it is to start, nurture and maintain an effective rep network.

According to Fetterolf, The Quaker Equipment Group, "When I was a manufacturer prior to opening my agency, we worked primarily with a direct sales force. Around 1985, we made the move to reps. We entered blindly and it took us about three or four years to properly establish the agencies we wanted to work with and to get them running smoothly."



E. John Fetterolf, president, The Quaker Equipment Group.



Bill Conrad, sales manager for Remington Arms Company, Inc.

The Kulpsville, Pennsylvania, rep points to Remington Arms Company, Inc.'s Industrial Products Division, Lonoke, Arkansas, as an example of a company that has made a similar move — and made it successfully.

Fetterolf describes the efforts of Bill Conrad, Remington Industrial's sales manager, as a major impetus for establishing excellent rep relations. "Bill Conrad has gone through a similar process that I did when I was

a manufacturer, and he's done a remarkable job. He began by attending one of MANA's manufacturer seminars in an effort to learn who reps are and what they do. Basically, he started with nothing and got up and running with reps very quickly."

By "getting up and running quickly," Fetterolf means:

- "We began with them by having an initial sales meeting so we could all get acquainted, then we were left alone to do our jobs."

When they have to contact us they do, and when we need to be in touch with them, they can count on us to do it.”

- “Commissions are paid accurately and on time — almost to the same day every month.”
- “They never miss an opportunity to communicate on matters of importance.”
- “They’re constantly on top of it when it comes to communicating valid sales leads to their reps.”
- “They make sure to send copies of all orders to us and let us know when they’re going to ship and who the contact is.”
- “They’re very responsive to any questions or problems we have. A measure of their responsiveness is seen in the fact that many times with commodity orders they’ll ship an order the same day they receive it.”

The Manufacturer’s View

From his perspective, here’s how Conrad views the manufacturer-rep relationship that he’s worked so long and hard to establish: “Remington Industrial business is aimed at a small niche market. Our products are industrial kiln guns that are used when cement or lime kilns become clogged or blocked. The guns, which shoot lead or zinc at 9,000-foot pounds, are used to clear the blockages.

“We decided to make the move to reps six or seven years ago because it was difficult for me to get all around the country meeting customer needs. It just seemed like a natural fit to hire reps and have them work on a commission basis. The reps we ultimately chose to work with were already calling on the customers we

served. At the same time, reps wouldn’t be making a living just off our products. The volume just isn’t there. Rather, they could piggyback their efforts and add our products to their sales books. Ours is a mature business that remains profitable for us and for the reps who work with us. Our reps like our products because they’re already in there across the desk from the customer selling nozzles, belting or loop systems. While in there on a sales call, they can easily visit the kiln area and determine customer needs.”

The Value of MANA

He adds that one of the first things he did when anticipating the move to reps was to join MANA and work through the association’s directory in an effort to find independent representation. The Remington Industrial Division currently has five agencies covering the country. “There

are a few bare spots where we don’t need reps; for instance, where’s there’s no business.”

Over the years of working with reps, Conrad explains that perhaps the most challenging part of the job is to keep reps motivated for the task at hand. “Sure, commissions keep them motivated for sales but what we’ve got to do is keep them interested in keeping an eye on the customers’ needs, making sure they’re well serviced and making sure the competition doesn’t start calling on them.”

As to how he meets that challenge, Conrad admits it can be a difficult job. “Our products don’t necessarily need an intensive sales effort. We don’t need our reps to actually go out and get the orders. Many times orders will come in all on their own. But what we do ask our reps to do is to service the customer and the product.” He adds that there’s no extra commission for the servicing end of



John Fetterolf (right), The Quaker Equipment Group, inspects a kiln gun prior to firing with Barry Schweitzer, production supervisor, Buzzi Unicem, Stockertown, Pennsylvania.

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the business — “That comes with the territory.”

When it comes to the attributes Conrad and Remington look for in a rep, he notes that at the top of the list is the ability to follow up on problems. “We want and need someone in the field

who can solve problems on his own, that is, before I have to get involved. What I want is the rep who comes armed with solutions. The last thing I want is the customer to call me with a problem.”

Along with that ability to solve problems, Conrad says the kind of rep he values is one who can immediately meet the needs of the customer. “For instance, if he encounters a situation when we’re out of one product but another will complete the job, I want him to make that recommendation. He’s got to be a self-starter, someone who knows how to stay in the information loop and an indi-

vidual who’s adept at following up.”

Asked why he thinks Remington Industrial Products Division is the kind of company a rep would list among perfect principals, Conrad doesn’t have a ready explanation. “I do know that from the very beginning I hired all the reps myself. We work closely with them and have made them feel as if they are a part of the company. I try to treat them just as I would an employee and let them know that we’re all part of a team. If they need help in any areas, they know they can count on me.”

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