

---

# Rep And Manufacturer Skin A Cat The Easy Way



Harry Marek

**“Too many people look for different ways to skin a cat. Instead, what they should do is to follow the simplest path. In terms of taking products to market, that means using independent manufacturers’ representatives instead of direct salespeople.”**



If those words from Harry Marek, vice president of outside sales, Scot Forge Company, Franklin Park, Illinois, sound like an endorsement for the rep way of going to market, that’s exactly what they are.

MANA member Scot Forge is a 100 percent employee-owned manufacturer of custom open die and rolled ring forgings. Started as a small hammer shop in Chicago in 1893, the company has more than 100 years of experience leading the industry as one of the most modern and respected forging companies in the world.

It operates with more than 900,000 square feet of manufacturing space in five plants — Spring Grove and Franklin Park, Illinois; Clinton, Wisconsin; New Castle, Pennsylvania; and Wayne, Michigan.

Marek’s affinity for working with reps is reciprocated by MANA-member Bob Remark, The R.E. Marketing Company, Hartville, Ohio. According to Remark, “There are very few, if any, flaws in the relationships that Scot Forge has established with its reps. The most important thing I can say about the company is that they are completely rep-oriented.”

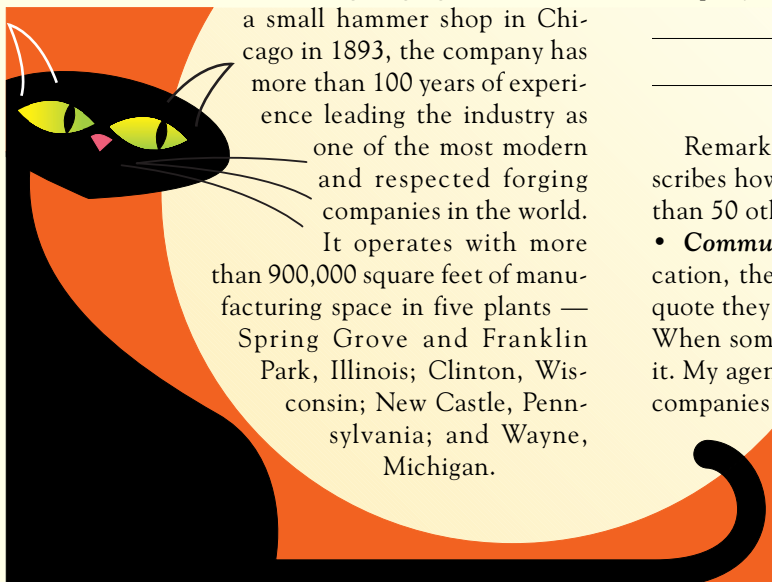
---

## Working Together

---

Remark adds weight to those words when he describes how Scot Forge works with him and its more than 50 other reps located across the United States.

- **Communication** — “When it comes to communication, they expect 100 percent follow-up on every quote they prepare. Call reports are entirely up to us. When something happens, we let them know about it. My agency sends in a monthly recap covering the companies we visit. Any important specifics are sent to them via e-mail. As to how Scot Forge communicates with us, they do



---

it regularly via phone and e-mail. Once again, that's done on an as-needed basis."

- **Field Visits** — "They make sure to conduct territory visits on a regular basis, but they always notify us three weeks in advance. And, when they get here, the first thing they say is 'Where can we go together to be most effective?' The second thing they do is remind us they're visiting to discuss issues that affect both of us. After that, they leave everything up to us when it comes to picking the places we go."

- **Field Support** — "A huge selling point for working with Scot Forge is their web site ([www.scotforge.com](http://www.scotforge.com)). It's a fabulous site with all the information needed about the company. On top of that, they provide us with brochures and CDs that present an overview of the company and all its capabilities. They also provide for us to attend trade shows and sales meetings. They're very fair that way."

- **Relationships** — "If there has been any change in the relationship over the years I've been working with Scot Forge, it's been improvement. They are absolutely on top of technological developments. In comparison to other companies, they are on the leading edge."

While Remark is quick to praise Scot Forge, the compliments don't go just one way. Executives with the manufacturing company are just as effusive in their praise of reps.

For instance, Sharon Haverstock, the company's executive vice president, maintains that "We've never doubted that reps are the way to go." Add to that Harry Marek's aforementioned comments, and you've got the ideal situation.

According to Haverstock, "We consider ourselves to be a progressive company, and we like people who are forward-thinking. That leads us to reps. As you get farther away from your home territory, it's more and more difficult to cover the territory. Reps are ideal in those situations because they are hungry and they don't want any cap on how much they can earn."

---

### Positive Rep Attributes

---

She continues that the types of reps that are best to work with possess a strong belief in customer service. "When we find reps that really believe in serving the customer, we love to work with them. Those are the ones who always want to do the right thing for both the

customer and the manufacturer. They're hard-working, self-disciplined and motivated. They are sharp people who understand human nature. Furthermore, they are firm believers in continuous improvement. They live in the territory and know the community from top to bottom. "

Haverstock is hardly the only one to think that way. "Because of the commission structure and the way we work with them, I find that reps are entirely self-motivated," says Marek. "You don't have to micro manage a rep sales system. All you have to do is stay in touch, travel with, watch and listen to what they do. Keep an eye on their sales. If you see something going wrong, just give them a bump and they'll react. I've also found that reps are more inclined to make that final sales call of the day compared to what a direct salesman might do."

---

### Enjoying the Experience

---

Just as Haverstock, Marek finds very little challenge in working with reps. "I enjoy every aspect of my contact with them. Reps are all I've ever managed, and I thoroughly enjoy the experience." He did add, however, that if there is ever a concern, it comes when an agency has to be replaced. "That doesn't happen very often to us. When it does, it's generally because one of our reps has retired. What I do then is to look for a prospective rep in the MANA directory. I've also had good luck checking with my customers in the territory. They'll be quick to recommend someone they think is good, especially if it's someone they'll wind up working with."

As has already been noted, Scot Forge isn't a big believer in written sales reports. "If there's a specific problem I have to know about, then they're fine. But by and large, written reports are useless. I find that problems can generally be solved with a phone call. If something is going wrong, I want to know about it so I can come back to correct it and make sure the customer is happy."

When asked why things seem to go so smoothly between his company and the reps that work its territories, Marek says, "Maybe it's because it's all I've ever known. The man who owned the company previously believed in reps. I fell right in line. For me and Scot Forge, reps are the simplest and best way to go to market."

Copyright © 2005, Manufacturers' Agents National Association

One Spectrum Pointe, Suite 150, Lake Forest, CA 92630-2283 • Phone: (949) 859-4040 • Toll-free: (877) 626-2776

Fax: (949) 855-2973 • E-mail: [mana@manaonline.org](mailto:mana@manaonline.org) • Web site: [www.manaonline.org](http://www.manaonline.org)

All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited.