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# Customer Service Makes This Principal **PERFECT**

**W**hat got Robert “Bob” Williams’ attention when he started working with Lumsden Corporation more than six years ago was the fact that they actually cared about their customers. “I originally came from a company that had to have everything their way. No matter what the problem was, they wouldn’t bend.”

Williams, BS&K Company, Charlotte, North Carolina, explains that Lumsden “is the first principal I had when I opened my doors, and they’ve kept me going. They are completely customer-oriented and focused only on providing what the customer wants.” That would appear to be the perfect fit, given Williams’ customer philosophy detailed on his web site. “Ours is a long-term goal. Listen, ask questions, suggest and make recommendations. Even if it means not getting the order this time. Selling a product just for a sale is not the answer. In-depth product and application knowledge, honesty, accuracy, flexibility and a genuine concern for the customer’s best interest is our business.”

He continues that Lumsden “uses reps extensively and treats us as partners. They don’t do any-



*Kneeling in front, left to right: Mike Carroll (Southern California, AZ, NV), Owen Stone (OK) and Frank Casiotta (FL). Back row, left to right: Pete Moore, (sales manager) Dave Ernst, Karen Devine (inside sales), Tom Shurtz (Northern California), Dan Bendell (WI and MN), Mike Bendell (WI and MN), Glenn Farrell (CEO), Dave Kmiecik (inside sales), Sue Williams (NC, SC, TN), Bob Williams (NC, SC, TN), Ed Boll (Northeast U.S.). Inset: Bob Williams, BS&K Company.*

# The Search For The Perfect Principal

Two years ago, MANA asked its members for recommendations of manufacturers they work with that exhibit the qualities of respect, understanding, quality products and service, leadership, communication, integrity, and a partnership mentality. What we were looking for were descriptions of manufacturers that fit the mold for the kind of marketing partner reps are constantly seeking. We were deluged with responses. In June 2004, *Agency Sales* began a series of articles on the perfect manufacturer. Each month, as we report on those manufacturers, we will add to the list.

- **Angola Wire Products**, Angola, Indiana. Products: Welded wire subassemblies, baskets, display racks, laser cut and formed steel.
- **Manth-Brownell, Inc.**, Kirkville, New York. Products: High-volume screw machine, machining services and CNC.
- **Specialty Screw Corporation**, Rockford, Illinois. Products: Cold forming, non-standard engineered fasteners.
- **Bradford White Corporation**, Ambler, Pennsylvania. Products: Water heaters for residential, commercial and hydronic space heating applications.
- **Empire Comfort Systems (ECS), Inc.**, Belleville, Illinois. Products: Space heating, fireplace and outdoor products.
- **Emseal Joint Systems, Ltd.**, Westborough, Massachusetts. Products: Comprehensive line of expansion joints, joint sealants and gaskets.
- **Teledyne Hastings Instruments**, Hampton, Virginia. Products: A complete line of vacuum instruments and flow instruments.
- **Birchwood Casey**, Eden Prairie, Minnesota. Products: A variety of gun care products for professional gunsmiths, shooters and collectors, including gun-cleaning solvents, stock finish, bluing, lubricants and rust preventives.
- **Remington Arms Company, Inc.**, Industrial Products Division, Lonoke, Arkansas. Products: Industrial ammunition, industrial kiln guns.
- **Legend Valve & Fittings, Inc.**, Shelby Township, Michigan. Products: Valves designed specifically for the professional wholesaler and contractor.
- **Powers Scientific**, Pipersville, Pennsylvania. Products: A broad range of environmentally controlled chambers to meet researchers' needs.
- **SJE-Rhombus**, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. Products: Liquid level control, and electromechanical and microprocessor-based control panels.
- **Scot Forge Company**, Spring Grove, Illinois. Products: Custom open die and rolled ring forgings.
- **National Products Company**, Louisville, Kentucky. Products: Wood kitchen cabinet and commercial casework products.
- **Howden Buffalo**, Camden, South Carolina. Products: Custom-engineered air movement equipment for many industries and applications.
- **Helwig Carbon Products, Inc.**, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Products: Carbon brushes, brushholders, constant force spring assemblies, mechanical carbons, quick disconnect terminals and mounts, sliding contacts and electrical contacts.
- **Jordan Valve**, a division of Richards Industries, Cincinnati, Ohio. Products: A variety of products including pressure regulators, back pressure regulators, temperature regulators, pneumatic and electric control valves, sanitary valves and accessories.
- **Niagara Cutter**, Amherst, New York. Products: Standard and special cutting tools including solid carbide, diamond coated, high-speed steel, cobalt and milling cutters.
- **PIAB USA, Inc.**, Hingham, Massachusetts. Products: A variety of vacuum products.
- **Eriez Magnetics**, Erie, Pennsylvania. Products: Advanced technology for magnetic, vibratory and metal detection applications.
- **Lumsden Corporation**, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Products: Metal belts, heavy-duty wire cloth and spiral-woven conveyor belting.

thing in the market without their reps. They treat me excellently and I enjoy working with them.”

If there’s any doubt concerning the manufacturer’s commitment to taking care of its customers, the company states its own philosophy on that subject pretty clearly: “Customer Service — We exist to satisfy our customers’ needs. All departments in Lumsden Corporation live by this principle.” And according to Pete Moore, Lumsden’s sales manager, they meet those customer needs with the assistance of their reps.

### Three Decades of Experience

Moore explains that the company has been working with independent reps for more than 30 years and can boast that one agency has been with them for 31 years.

Just as any other company, however, there are occasions when reps have to be located to cover a territory or otherwise replace another agency. When that occurs, Moore says they’ve had good luck finding representation via ads placed in *Agency Sales* magazine. “We’ve just recently signed on two new firms we found that way,” he says.

When it comes to evaluating the reps the company wants to conduct business with, Moore emphasizes, “We’re always looking for someone with excellent product knowledge, but that’s not all. They can’t give up. They’ve got to exhibit a tenacity for work-

ing with customers, and specifically, customers in the food industry. Since that’s our specialty, the rep who has contacts with those customers is obviously desirable. It’s interesting that we’ve found that once you’ve got a good relationship with a customer in the food industry, they tend to stay with you forever. It’s tough to get new customers. That’s why contacts are so important to the rep and the manufacturer.”

After three decades of working with reps, Moore explains that Lumsden and its personnel have developed a keen appreciation for the fact that the rep has a lot on his plate. “We’ve been working with reps for a long time now. If anything, I think we’ve gained an appreciation and understanding of the rep and what he faces on a daily basis. It’s our policy to work well and closely with them, and it’s certainly counterproductive to fight with them. I think probably the most important thing we’ve learned is working to keep the rep’s focus on us and our products while at the same time understanding that they have a lot of other things to do. Just as other manufacturers, we want to capture as much of the rep’s time as we can. That’s why we work overtime to see reps immediately get answers to questions and plenty of support. We don’t want them to feel that they’re hanging out in the territory on their own with no support. We communicate to them the fact that we make an

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excellent quality product, and it’s a product that we’re proud of. We’re equally proud of the fact that we don’t make product mistakes and we complete our deliveries on time. Because we do that, our reps aren’t constantly walking into a buzz saw of customer complaints and problems.” He adds that while the company’s products are somewhat unusual and are generally custom-made, “We see to it that the reps get product samples and literature as quickly as possible.”

Moore sums up the company’s view of its reps when he explains, “Good reps can be very demanding of their manufacturers — but that’s a positive. It’s up to us to meet their demands. We look at our reps as the lifeblood of our company. Without them, we’re getting nothing done in the marketplace. We respect them, and we work hard to keep the great relationship we have with them alive. Our job is to provide them with all they need to do their jobs, and we’re here to answer all of their questions. We respect them and hope they respect us. We understand what they have to do to perform their jobs, and we hope they have the same understanding as to what it takes for us to do our jobs.” □

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