



# REPS DEALING WITH THE PRESSURE

BY JACK FOSTER

**WHEN A MANUFACTURER DEMANDS MORE FROM THEIR REPS, REPS MUST EVALUATE WHETHER THE EXTRA WORK IS WORTH THE BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP.**

**W**hat's a rep to do when their financially pressured manufacturers push just as much marketing/sales responsibilities onto their shoulders? Sure, the rep can grin and bear it, all the while reserving their right to complain about what they perceive as unfair treatment. That approach doesn't augur well for a sound relationship in the future, however.

More effective perhaps are the routes taken by some reps to incorporate everything from better communications to having the business acumen to evaluate whether representing a given line is truly a wise decision.

Mark Tomchik, Acuity Medical, Inc., Annapolis, says, "This trend is certainly very evident to us. We sell both capital equipment and disposables, and we've found that when we develop a quote for \$50,000-\$100,000, our manufacturers are expecting a lot out of us. When that happens, I've found that it's best to be proactive in our communications with manufacturers. We let them know everything that's happening in the territory."

He adds that as reps, "We're in a position where we have no choice but to

perform well. And that's exactly what we do."


Tomchik continues, "We know the trend is here, but I don't know if it's going to grow. It certainly impacts a lot of folks who may not be well prepared to deal with it. We deal with it by doing as much as we can for our manufacturers and our customers."

Someone else who knows the trend is alive and well is David Wherry, DLW Enterprises, LLC, Glen Allen, Virginia. "We see this as a direct result of the economy," he explains. "What I choose to do is to pick my battles. When more is required of us than in the past, I'll view each opportunity individually. I'll conduct a risk analysis, determine if the opportunity is worth pursuing and ultimately make a decision as to whether or

not I'll walk away from the business."

Ron Marks, Marks Management Services, Inc., Birmingham, Michigan, explains that it's certainly evident to him that manufacturers "want and need more business than ever before. As a result, they expect me to cover more of the territory and even go so far as to hire sub reps to work their lines. Is their approach reasonable? Probably. Do I push back? No... primarily because of the economic times and the fact is, I'm making a pretty good living doing what I do."

He adds that if new principals come on line and put pressure on him to perform above and beyond the norm, "We'll certainly try to negotiate a fee for any extra services we might perform."

Chuck Day, Charles Day Sales, Dallas, Texas, is not surprised with manufacturer efforts to put marketing/sales pressure on their reps. "I know how the cow eats cabbage," he says, "And, when all is said and done, I believe in letting people ask for whatever they want. My role as a rep continues to evolve, and this is all just part of the evolution. At the same time, however, I'm not afraid to let a manufacturer know exactly what it takes for me to perform certain functions. At the same time, I'll let him know that we're involved in 18- to 24-month sales cycles. During that period of time, it's hardly unheard of for the rep to require payment for a business development function." 

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