

# Visibility Means Opportunity

BY JOHN HASKELL



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# When Your Rep Firm is Visible, Good Things Happen

What are the “magic words” in the rep business?

Magic happens when a sales manager asks a good customer, “Who are the good reps who call on you?”

These magic words should result in your firm being named, but how often are you short listed? If your name is not on the tip of your customer’s tongues, you are doing something wrong.

**T**he most important thing you can be doing constantly for your firm is making sure that you get a smell of every opportunity of any size in your territory. You always have the option to say “No thank you” to any principal asking if you want to talk about interviewing with them for their line in your territory. But, if your name is not on the short list, you are missing opportunities. That is lost income.

## No Good Deed Goes ....

“We do a great job for our current principals.” This is great, but it is not enough. Just doing a great job for the lines you represent is nowhere near enough to get you on that short list, tip of the tongue referral list.

Good work for existing principals is a given in your business. You can’t survive if you aren’t doing a good job. Doing an exceptional job is what the best rep firms do and even then that is not enough to get to the prime position in the territory.

## It Takes a Plan

Visibility — just as every other part of your business — is earned through constant development of it in every aspect of your business and your market. If you do not have a marketing and sales plan for your company you are missing the boat. Of course you have to have all of the basics:

- Profile
- Power Point Presentation
- Line Card
- Letters of reference from principals
- Letters of reference from customers
- Web site

These things are basic to positioning your firm to get the kind of visibility that is needed to keep growing and getting the right opportunities. If you don’t have these things in place, make them the first steps in your plan.

## More Pieces

After “the basics,” you have a lot of opportunities to build the visibility that gets you on the short list. How often do you communicate creatively with your customers? This type of communication is not about orders or regular business. This communication is about new opportunities, new challenges and new situations.

A rep firm is the branch office for each of its principals. In this role your firm should be pro-active. You need to be reaching out to your customers to let them know that they should be looking to you to bring them opportunities.

Once a quarter, your rep firm should be “agitating” in the marketplace. What is “agitating”? Agitating means stirring up the pot. Agitating means stimulating your

customers to think. Agitating means providing ideas, programs, and tools that can benefit the customer.

### Your Goal: A Seat at the Planning Table

What you want more than anything else is to be a part of your customer's business planning. You want to bring ideas to your customers so that they are involved with your rep firm on a regular basis. Your rep firm needs to be the one they are looking to in order to stimulate their opportunities for revenue growth in their business. They must see you as a **profit resource**.

If you are doing it through newsletters, table top shows, sales meetings, factory trips, lunch-and-learn with the customer's team, buddy visits to key end users, etc, you are going to have the top-of-mind awareness you want.

### Backselling Your Work

Visibility with your principals is vital to your success. The principal always wants to know "what did you do for me lately?" These proactive programs with your customers are perfect examples of what the branch office is doing to build the business.

Getting information and feedback to the principal about what you are doing, what you are trying and how it is working is fundamental to keeping your visibility level up with your principals. This means that there is top-of-the-head awareness of your firm with all of your principals.

### Principals Sell You Too

There is no question that the sales managers, regional managers and many others at your principals have opportunities with some regularity to provide a reference for your firm or to recommend you — remember the magic question gets asked of sales and marketing people in your industry all the time. As a result, you want to be on their "good list" at all times — that is what backselling is all about.

### It Takes Time

Yes, this type of planning and execution takes time and money. It really does not take much money. The simple tools for communication and visibility are not expensive today, but taking time to plan the programs and build the tools is important. Somehow your company must develop a way of building the plan and then a system for execution.

### Tools for Success

In order to have a successful visibility program you

need to set the time aside. To do this your company needs a **Marketing Calendar**. Yes, your rep business is just like your principal's business. You need to run your business just like a manufacturing company. Your best principals, the ones who are providing you with the best opportunities to sell and constantly increase your commission income, are the best organized. You have to be equally well-organized.

### Marketing Eliminates Excuses


The point is that having a plan and executing it eliminates all the excuses. You develop a calendar and make sure no one misses deadlines. You appropriate the necessary funds. You supervise and participate as necessary.

You are the leader, but you are not the primary doer. Why? Because you have neither the time nor the expertise.

### Create Your Own Marketing Team

The best way for a rep to achieve these goals is to create a team of a graphic designer and a writer. Develop the plan and leave it to these outsourced resources to get things done on time, completely and within budget. Your job is to provide input, pay the bills, discipline the process and praise good work. You want things done and are willing to pay for them.

### The Bottom Line

A well-organized rep firm that wants to grow is one that has a marketing and sales plan. This firm has the tools and programs. This firm is constantly reaching out to customers and end-users to make things happen. You are highly visible because you are providing the professional marketing, merchandising, sales promotion and sales management — this is expected of a branch office. 

**John Haskell**, Dr. Revenue®, is a professional speaker and marketing/sales consultant with more than 40 years' experience working with companies utilizing manufacturers' reps and helping rep firms. He has created the Principal Relations X-Ray, spoken to hundreds of rep associations and groups, including 32 programs for MANA from 2001 to 2005. He is also a regular contributor to *Agency Sales* magazine. For more information see [drrevenue.com](http://drrevenue.com) or contact [drrevenue@drrevenue.com](mailto:drrevenue@drrevenue.com).

