

The Human-Touch: Managing Dealer Channels

ABOUT THIS WHITE PAPER

This document contains useful information and recommendations for any organisation wanting to more efficiently manage channel partnerships and dealer networks. The target audience is the Chief Executive, Financial Controller, Marketing Manager, Channel Manager and/or E-commerce Manager.

OPENING STATEMENTS

Dealer Management is becoming increasingly difficult and expensive.

Retail selling is undergoing a metamorphic process caused by:

1. The growth of online shopping
2. Parallel importing and distribution
3. Cost of retaining competent people

MANAGING THE DEALER NETWORK

Effectively managing channel partners and dealer networks requires a huge investment into relationships, promotions, education, incentives and support. The cost of maintaining and energising a dealer network, is typically one of the highest expense items for manufacturers and distributors.

Failure to control and manage the dealer network can lead to parallel importing, alternative brand marketing, poor technical support, disenchanted customers and lost revenue.

TRADITIONAL METHODS

Every year manufacturers and distributors invent new programs to energise and incentivise the dealer network. Dealer conferences include motivational speakers, educational break-out sessions, dealer discussion panels, product promotions and corporate loyalty speeches.

- Dealer Managers travel the country promoting, educating, motivating and building key relationships.
- New brochures and technical training manuals are created, produced and distributed.
- New products are announced, marketing programs devised and subsequently promoted to the dealer network.

IMPORTANCE OF THE HUMAN-TOUCH

Aside from the advantage of location-based selling and support, the human-touch is one of the most important elements in any successful dealer network. Despite the inherent difficulties involved in retaining competent Dealer Managers and good Dealer Salespeople, it is an accepted fact that human-touch selling is still the most successful way to sell.

It is also accepted that human-touch selling comes at great expense due to the difficulties in finding and retaining good people, both at a distributor and dealer level, often resulting in a “successful” sales outcome, but not necessarily a “profitable” sales outcome.

ASK - UNDERSTAND - RECOMMEND - SELL

SHOP ASSISTANT

THE ART OF ONLINE SELLING

THE LACK OF HUMAN-TOUCH ON THE INTERNET

Online sales continue to climb and most manufacturers/distributors have recognised that the web is an important part in their marketing and sales strategy. Increasingly, organisations are beginning to include the ability to shop online, although this can often disrupt their long standing dealer network relationships. Alarming, 90%-98% of all online shoppers leave a website without completing the shopping transaction mostly caused by a confusing web interface, frustration with product selection tools, lost time and a lack of human-touch connection.

ATTEMPTS TO REPLICATE THE HUMAN-TOUCH ON THE INTERNET

Shopping websites are typically not human-friendly and rely on one-day specials, social media referrals, product selection by category and product recommendation based on the most popular sales to date. Online chat is being used by many organisations in an attempt to improve product selection, build confidence and to project a human-touch feeling to the end user. Unfortunately online chat is only as good as the salesperson who is chatting and suffers many of the same issues of staff retention, on-going expenses and product misrepresentation.

SUCCESSFUL HUMAN-TOUCH ON THE INTERNET

Shop Assistant is the first product of its kind to successfully bridge the human-touch technology gap. At every phase of the design, development and implementation process, each Shop Assistant deployment is uniquely customised to the specific business requirements of the Dealer Network. The resulting online human-touch interface quickly establishes connection with the end-user and builds confidence via the intuitive product selection and dealer identification process. Product information is always accurate, dealer education is available online, brand value is highlighted and technical details are instantly accessible.

MANAGEMENT REPORTING

Shop Assistant automatically monitors and tracks end-user interactions, providing manufacturers and distributors with accurate metrics for fine tuning and product promotions. Management reports are reviewed in conjunction with Shop Assistant personnel to ensure that the best possible Dealer Manager is always being delivered online to the end-user and to the Dealer Network.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Shop Assistant was created to close the gap between traditional e-commerce and bricks and mortar retailer shopping. Having your best-salesperson available 24/7 on the retail floor is desirable, but not physically possible, so it is important to use a system that replicates the in-store experience.

ABOUT SHOP ASSISTANT

Adoption of Shop Assistant has been rapid and successful, and is already being used by Walmart, Myers, BestBuys, Swann, Resene, Skope, Sleepyhead and many more. Organisations running Shop Assistant report increased sales, improved dealer management, better management reporting and increased customer loyalty.

ABOUT WIRED INTERNET GROUP

Wired Internet Group is a leading web application developer with more than seventeen years of experience in web design, e-commerce and business analysis.

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For more information: OnlineShopAssistant.com