



# First Impressions

For Dental Sales Professionals • March, 2011



## Perfect Partners

Distributor and manufacturer reps find the best partnerships are based on good communication and honesty.

### PLUS:

- When the Heat is On, It's Time to CHILL
- QUICK BYTES: Profiling the latest developments in software and gadgets

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The bottom line is, “sales reps can’t just jump in the car and assume what each other’s role is. Pre-planning is the most important thing.”

**When the Heat is On, It’s Time to CHILL**

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# When the Heat is On, It's Time to CHILL

Steps to help you handle any situation

**Y**our boss drops you an e-mail saying, "I have some questions about the way you handled our key client meeting yesterday. I would have liked to see you present our value proposition the way we discussed before the meeting. Please stop by my office at the end of the day for a few minutes so we can have a chat."

What will your first reaction be? Fear? Doubt? Anger? And what will your next move be? Will you start asking others if they have heard anything you should know? Will you preempt the meeting by calling the boss and asking him to explain what you did wrong? Whatever the reaction, it's safe to say the sick pit in your stomach will be sending your brain a million mixed messages. But before you do anything, you first need to CHILL!

## C: Calm down

This important first step prevents negative emotions from affecting logic. To calm down, close your eyes and take several slow, deep breaths. The extra oxygen will help release your physical tension. Next, remind yourself that you control the outcome of the situation and with it, your stress level. Knowing you have the power to make things even better than they were before the "meeting" will settle your mind.



## H: Harness harmful knee-jerk reactions

Have you ever pressed SEND on your computer only to ask yourself, "Why did I just do that?" You wonder if what you just sent will be the death of your career. In about two minutes you go through the five stages of career death.

- **Denial.** "I didn't just send that e-mail, did I?"
- **Anger.** "He had it coming. It's about time somebody stood up to him."
- **Bargaining.** "Dear God, if you can cause a quick e-mail outage, I will never use the word Jackwaggon in an e-mail again."
- **Depression.** "What am I going to tell my wife?"
- **Acceptance.** "Oh well. Who wants to go to Dave and Busters for lunch?"

In the case above, your first instinct is to hastily write a defensive e-mail back. You have "loaded your gun" and you're ready to fire – but don't.

Knee-jerk e-mails have been responsible for the destruction of many careers. Don't let the combination of emotions and a keyboard dismantle your rise to the top of your organization.

### **I: Identify real concerns then prepare**

Put yourself in the place of the other person. What might they be thinking and feeling? What will they say to you when you enter the room or pick up the phone? Think through how the conversation will go and prepare calm responses. By thinking of

ter. Be specific. While the underperformers are doing their best to develop creative excuses as to why they fell short, you will be using your time and energy to develop creative ways to improve your performance in the future.

### **L: Love feedback**

The way you choose to accept or reject feedback says everything about your professional future. Those who first look to discredit input from others miss out on key learning that is necessary to become a top

## **While the underperformers are doing their best to develop creative excuses as to why they fell short, you will be using your time and energy to develop creative ways to improve your performance in the future.**

the conversation before and thinking through the BEST possible responses, you will keep control in the meeting. Remember, calmness and confidence shows leadership.

### **L: Look for improvement**

Let's face it. You're a pretty smart person. You usually know exactly how you performed on game day. In fact, if you can be honest with yourself, your analysis might just be the toughest and best advice you get. So come up with areas you could have done bet-

performer. You can learn more from your failures than from your successes, so when others tell you that you have fallen short of expectations, don't automatically discredit it. Embrace it.

So this month, when the heat is on, remember to CHILL! By doing so, you will have found some of the most important skills needed for you to become your company's top performer. And those skills often translate into cold, hard, commissions ... and cash. **[FI]**

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*Brian is author of the book, 20 Days to the Top – How the PRECISE Selling Formula Will Make You Your Company's Top Sales Performer in 20 Days or Less. To sign up for free sales training modules on getting to the top, go to [www.precisesellingonline.com](http://www.precisesellingonline.com). Or drop Brian an e-mail at [bsullivan@preciseselling.com](mailto:bsullivan@preciseselling.com).*

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# QuickBytes

## Editor's Note:

Technology is playing an increasing role in the day-to-day business of sales reps. In this department, *First Impressions* will profile the latest developments in software and gadgets that reps can use for work and play.



## Paying for your Starbucks

Starbucks customers can now pay for in-store purchases with select smartphones. Customers need to download the free Starbucks Card Mobile App for select BlackBerry smartphones, iPhone or iPod touch mobile devices. Payment is made by holding the smartphone in front of a scanner on the countertop and scanning the Starbucks Card Mobile App's on-screen barcode.

## Skype for iPhone users

Skype has introduced video chatting for iPhone users over both 3G and WiFi networks. Available to download from the Apple App Store, the Skype for iPhone App is said to allow iPhone, iPad and iPod touch owners to make and/or receive free Skype video calls for the first time. Calls can be made between devices using the new Skype for iPhone app and desktops including Skype for Windows 4.2 and above, Skype for Mac 2.8 and above, Skype for Linux and ASUS Videophone.

## High-tech trash

Americans now own about 3 billion electronic products, with a turnover rate of about 400 million units annually, according to "Tackling High-Tech Trash: The E-Waste Explosion and What We Can Do About It," by Demos, a New York City-based public policy research and advocacy organization. These sales volumes and rapid turnover

rates are creating the fastest growing waste stream in the world: in the U.S. alone, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that over 372 million electronic units weighing 3.16 million tons entered the waste stream in 2007 and 2008. Less than 14 percent was recycled, while the rest went into dumps and incinerators. Much of what is recycled, moreover, is handled unsafely in developing countries, posing serious health and environmental risks. The organization makes a number of recommendations, including: expanding take-back and recycling programs, ending the export of hazardous e-waste for environmentally unsound and socially irresponsible materials recovery processing, supporting research and development in green chemistry and engineering, and expanding the number of certified e-recyclers.

## Easy on the ears

What do you want from your headphones? Escape, at least for a time. The Comply earbud tips, from Hearing Components (a spin-off of 3M), delivers just that, according to a review in the *New York Times*. The manufacturer says its Comply T-400 tips are 30 times softer than the silicone used on ordinary bud tips. And they're not expensive; the reporter bought a set of six tips (two small, two medium and two large) for \$13. Check out [www.complyfoam.com](http://www.complyfoam.com).

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# Perfect Partners

**Distributor and manufacturer  
reps find the best partnerships  
are based on good  
communication and honesty.**

By Laura Thill

**P**erfection may be out of reach – but not out of sight. Through consistent communication and open discussion, distributor and manufacturer reps can form great – if not near-perfect – partnerships.

“The biggest mistake reps on both sides can make is being less than candid in their conversations,” says Jim Aycock, director of sales, Midmark Corp. (Versailles, Ohio). “We joke that, on the manufacturer side, no good conversation begins with, ‘That’s the first time I’ve heard of this type of problem!’ and on the distributor side, ‘...what my best customer needs...’” Strong ties between the two evolve out of honesty, he points out. Manufacturers should fully disclose information to the distributor rep, and distributor reps should be open about what types of solutions their dental customers are looking for, he notes. “We [manufacturer reps] must understand the general challenges distributor reps are facing,” he says.

“The manufacturer rep’s role on co-travels vary with each relationship,” Aycock continues. For instance, the relationship between the two may be different if both reps are experienced vs. a relationship in which one of the reps is new to the business, he points out. “The manufacturer-distributor rep relationship also depends on the distributor rep’s relationship with [his or her] customers,” he adds. The bottom line is, “sales reps can’t just jump in the car and assume what each other’s role is. Pre-planning is the most important thing.” Both reps should decide ahead of time what types of customers they want to call on and what each of their roles will be, he explains. “And, they both need to have realistic expectations and goals for the day.”

Indeed, focus is key to a productive meeting with the customer, says John Wood, senior territory manager for specialty division, Dentsply (York, Pa.). The last thing sales reps want to do is to “throw a lot at the customer and see where it goes,” he says. “Focusing on the needs of the practice shows respect for the customer’s time.

“My territory extends from Boston to the Washington D.C. area,” Wood continues. “I work with multiple branches and many different distributor reps.

**The bottom line is, “sales reps can’t just jump in the car and assume what each other’s role is. Pre-planning is the most important thing.”**

And while he appreciates the value of co-traveling, he believes there are ways to ensure such trips are productive. “When I’m in an area, I’ll let the distributor rep know I’m there. We won’t spend the whole day in the car.” Rather, the pair will focus on the needs of a particular customer within a certain specialty (e.g., radiology, endodontics, pharmaceutical). “For instance, we’ll meet with a customer who has recently converted – or is on the verge of converting – to digital radiography,” he explains. It’s important to narrow down the needs of a practice ahead of time, he notes. “Is the dentist a gadget guy? Does he

# Perfect Partners

or she want hands-on [experience] with products? What would he or she like us to leave behind?"

## Co-traveling: the good and the bad

Still, no matter how in sync distributor and manufacturer reps are with regard to the customer's needs, co-traveling can be tricky at times. For one, dentists are busier than ever before, says Ken Elias, a West Coast field sales consultant for Henry Schein Dental. It can be difficult for distributor reps to get face time with a customer, and when they do, the dentist may be looking to discuss personal issues or his or her business, he says. "The dentist can't do this when the distributor rep is with the manufacturer rep," he says. It's important to respect the dentist's time with regard

**"We need to train our distributor rep [partners] to ensure they are comfortable with our products and can go out and discuss them."**

– John Wood, senior territory manager for specialty division, Dentsply

to when distributor reps bring in a manufacturer rep and how often they do so.

"Also, when you co-travel, neither the distributor rep nor the manufacturer rep can take other calls," Elias continues. So, while co-travel can be a good thing, it's not always productive, he points out. "That said, I do like to co-travel," he says. "But, it's important to base co-travels on the customers' needs." Sometimes he finds it helpful to simply meet the manufacturer rep for lunch, pick up brochures and discuss promotions, which he can pass along to the customer. But, other times, it's better to bring along the manufacturer rep on a sales call, he notes. For instance, when a product is technology-driven (e.g., endoscopic or implants), it can be helpful both to

the dentist, who must use it, and the distributor rep, who must explain how to use it, to have the manufacturer rep along on a couple of sales calls.

In the end, however, it's the distributor rep's job to offer all available products and then let the customer know which solutions will best meet the needs of the practice, says Elias. "I tell my customers, 'Here are some great products.' Then I'll present other dentists' testimonials. But, I won't push my customers to switch from a product that's working for them."

## An opportunity

In spite of the ups and downs of co-traveling, it often presents an opportunity that sales reps do not want to miss, says David Surks, president and owner of Freud Dental Supply, Flanders, N.J. "Manufacturer reps can be educators, and distributor reps can learn from them," he points out. It would be a mistake not to take advantage of this, he adds, noting that the second biggest mistake distributor reps can make is to not follow up on offers made on behalf of the manufacturer rep. "I encourage my sales reps to follow up on all promises



made during co-travels with manufacturer reps," he says. "They shouldn't wait for the manufacturer rep to do this. It's the distributor rep's responsibility."

At the same time, manufacturer reps have a responsibility to train their distributor rep partners on products, adds Wood. "We need to train our distributor rep [partners] to ensure they are comfortable with our products and can go out and discuss them," he points out, noting that this is especially important in the case of new products. Communication is essential, he says. "We don't want to surprise distributor reps with new products, [nor] do we want to throw a lot of stuff in their mailbox." For some, email and voice mail are the best forms of communication, he explains. "Manufacturer reps should work



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this out with their distributor rep partners ahead of time. They should find out what works best for them. Communication is something that can always be improved.”

This year, Wood looks forward to bringing extra value to his distributor rep partners by offering their dental customers free hour-long continuing education sessions. “So, the sales rep can say to his customer, ‘[Our manufacturer rep] can come in and provide your office with a one-hour free credit,’” he says. “I provide pre-session booklets. Then, at the end of the session, I direct them to a website where they can take a test to receive credit.”

## Tools for a successful sale

Some of the tried and true leave-behinds, such as literature and tear-outs, continue to serve a purpose, as long as they are handled appropriately, according to experts. “It may not work well to leave the customer with a whole catalog,” says Wood. “But it still works to leave a sheet that highlights the features and benefits of the products.” Ideally, though, he would like to be able to offer a separate information handout to the distributor rep. “If we give the dentist’s glossy sheet to the distributor rep, [he or she] may miss certain points about the product,” he says. Since it’s often not possible to provide separate literature for the distributor rep, manufacturer partners must train them that much more thoroughly to ensure they are able to field questions from their customers, he adds.

From the distributor rep’s perspective, it can be helpful to provide the dentist with manufacturer

literature. But, it takes more than a glossy handout to make a sale. “Dentists can get inundated with e-mails, so they do appreciate it when they can see [information] and clinical reviews in print,” says Elias, adding that literature, brochures and clinical reports are all helpful to the sale. “But, many purchases involve distributor rep follow-up,” he says. “Dental customers look for their distributor rep’s opinion. They’ll call the distributor rep later on and ask, ‘What do you think?’”

## From the distributor rep’s perspective, it can be helpful to provide the dentist with manufacturer literature.

Indeed, while literature and tear-outs are essential, they don’t necessarily drive business, according to Aycock. They are a nice tangible that can be left behind, but successful selling calls for “a true understanding of how your products work and how they fit into the market,” he says. It’s up to the manufacturer rep to help the distributor rep match their products to their customers’ needs, he adds. Which is why he favors trade shows, open houses and lunch-and-learns. “The tear

sheet is one touch point, but it really helps to get in front of a dental practice and show them how, say, a stool works and what the ergonomics is behind it. We want to go in and show the practice how a particular product fits in with its goals.”

Promotions, too, are useful, but, again, they should be a win-win for everyone, Aycock continues. “Everyone should benefit from the promotion in order for it to be successful,” he says. And, dentists should get more from a promotion than simply a discounted price, he adds, noting that it’s important to help customers implement a plan early in the year for acquiring new equipment and fully taking advantage of end-of-year tax breaks.

Surk has this to say about promotions: Enticements are great, but not when they “load the dentist’s shelves. If the customer’s shelves are filled, [he or she] won’t call us back soon enough!” **[FI]**

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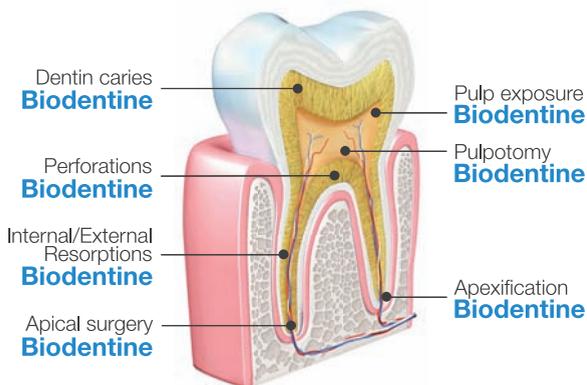
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