

Preface

The oldest sales cliché in the book is, “Nothing happens in business until somebody sells something.”

In wholesale distribution, selling still is done primarily by frontline, flesh-and-blood salespeople who work directly with customers. Those salespeople are most effective when they have strong leadership, a plan, direction from management, coaching, and a positive team environment in which to work. Poor management and bad leadership will kill the selling spirit of good and developing salespeople—and it will eventually chase them away.

Although technology continues to change and economies continue to cycle, the basics of effectively managing salespeople at wholesale distribution companies remain the same. In this business, sales management is a hands-on job subject to real-time performance appraisal. That appraisal is conducted daily by salespeople, customers, suppliers, and distributor general managers and owners. This book provides real-world ideas, methods, and direction for distributor sales managers. Whether you are a new wholesale distribution sales executive putting your system together or an experienced sales executive looking for new perspectives and ideas on the basics, this book offers specifics you can use immediately. They include

- ◆ Straightforward “how to” text on nine key sales management skills.
- ◆ Templates and outlines you can adapt to your situation.

- ◆ Examples of the good, the bad, and the ugly of wholesale distribution sales management, drawn from my own experience and from my observation of others in the industry; these examples are at the end of each chapter, noted as “Real-World Experience”; names are fictional, but the examples are not.
- ◆ A compendium of resources to help wholesale distribution sales managers continue their skills development.

Wholesale distribution makes things work in our economy, and sales managers make things happen at wholesale distribution companies! Without strong, effective sales management and leadership, no wholesaler-distributor can meet its sales objectives. It’s that simple. With that in mind, sales managers must be catalysts for forward motion in their companies. This book shows how to do that.

This Book Is Based on Experience

The content of this how-to book for wholesale distribution sales managers is based on my years of experience in wholesale distribution:

- Five years calling on distributor sales managers for a major manufacturer.
- Fourteen years as a wholesaler-distributor sales manager.
- Sixteen years as president of that same distributor, with continued direct sales responsibility; I owned the company for 10 of those years.
- Four years as a sales/marketing consultant and trainer serving the wholesale distribution industry.

In addition, I served as president of the industry association for my distributor’s line of trade. My distributorship earned many manufacturer sales awards and was acknowledged by the leading publication in our line of trade as its single “Value Added Distributor” in 2003.

A Note About Language

Although wholesale distribution has, in the past, been a male-dominated field, there have always been successful women in all roles. And today, excellence in wholesale distribution is not limited to any demographic group. Wholesale distribution is, by and large, a meritocracy. However, to avoid confusion and awkward phrasing with pronouns, the male “he” is used throughout this book.

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