

Midland Metal

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The e-commerce market continues to evolve. The number of places that contractors and original equipment manufacturers are able to order their parts from have skyrocketed in recent years. Manufacturers and third-party distributors are developing better and better website interfaces and shipping procedures, creating a very competitive market out there. Wholesalers and distributors must position themselves as knowledgeable, indispensable experts in their field through use of specialized sales tools.

Some digital distributors are able to add value in ways that traditional distributors are not—quick response times, cheaper products, and speedy delivery. But it's important for industrial distributors to set themselves apart from the plethora of other options out there. Because product pricing has become more transparent and uniform, it takes a backseat to speedy order fulfillment, the consistency of your product, and a reputation for good support.

In fact, distributors almost always seem to value relationships and services above all else. According to an Industrial Direct survey, more than 87 percent of respondents chose relationships as the top reason they earn business. Product availability was second at 79 percent, followed by delivery time at 64 percent, and technical support at 63 percent while Price was fifth out of nine options.

In other words, instead of just offering the lowest prices, wholesalers need to keep up by focusing on providing quality customer service, displaying a thorough knowledge about their products, and offering packaged sales tools tailored to their customer's needs.

These sales and marketing tools need to be customized as much as possible so they can support the customer in promoting their brand. Any catalogs, brochures, and ordering interfaces the wholesaler provides should be mobile and tablet-friendly, easy to read, and even easier to use. Customers have been widely reported to order all their products from one source, so the wider the assortment of products offered by distributors, the better and more convenient it is for customers so they can limit their number of vendors. As distributors help their customers market their brand and create demand, sales techniques that are taught by the distributor also help to close deals and boost profits.

Equally important, industrial distributors need to follow through and up on their promise to delivery in a wide range of geographic regions and in a timely manner. Due to their ability to scale, many distributors can even process relatively small orders more efficiently than the customer can.

And most important of all, distributors can differentiate themselves and create value for their customers by providing exceptional customer service. Not only are they the

most knowledgeable about their products, but they can ensure market information to their customers, insights about product solutions and projections about customer demand. They can also support their customers with specialized services and troubleshooting techniques for each individual product.