

# Integrative Sales

*Becoming a Green expert might require thinking outside the box, as well as the industry. The payoff could mean more sales.*

**T**oday's savvy distributors are constantly on the prowl for innovative ways to find and keep more customers. But often, I hear distributor sales reps (DSRs) complain that even with the advent of a more accepting Green marketplace, sales are still down.

One solution is to become the Green expert on your block and then use that expertise to adopt integrative selling. This new type of selling is more solution based than ever before and does more than just bring Green chemicals together with Green equipment (although that is still a good idea). This is truly outside of the box thinking and requires DSRs to also think outside of the industry.

With a deluge of interest in buildings becoming Green certified, there is a knowledge gap that exists today. Building owners are looking for answers to all of the building's problems, not just Green cleaning issues. They want to know how to save energy along with improving the indoor air quality. They want to know how to minimize the waste stream from the building in addition to extending the life cycle of the floor finish. The challenge for jan/san distributors is to find those answers and provide a holistic solution for the customer. First, and most importantly, we need to ensure that the source for answers to all of our Green questions is accurate.

## Accurate information

Several years ago, you could check the Internet and find very little information on Green cleaning. Today, there are many sites to peruse. As a matter of fact, there is so much data that you may wonder who to turn to for the



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reliable factual information. There needs to be some sort of encompassing agency that dependably covers Green cleaning policies, programs and products. Along with providing the necessary knowledge to claim an appreciable amount of Green expertise, this agency should itself be credible. I have found that not-for-profit organizations and the federal government are helping to establish this credibility.

Although the government has not yet regulated the industry from a Green cleaning perspective, the time is coming. With health issues such as MRSA, H1N1 and other community acquired viruses being reported more frequently, our customer base has become more aware of the increasing need for good cleaning programs. I believe the government will respond with regulations that tell us what to do and how to do it, as we all "go Green." Increasing litigation in response to health issue outbreaks will propel this regulation forward even more quickly than we may anticipate. Although many DSRs have capable cleaning for health programs available, the need to regulate the many and varied approaches to expert answers from private companies will soon become more apparent. Government may also assume that responsibility. Therefore, assuming the role of the integrative salesperson will not only require innovation but the proper certification, as well.

## Integration

Integrative sales take into account all of the building's systems including HVAC systems, janitor closets, landscaping, reflective roofs and more. Today's DSRs have the opportunity to learn more about the whole building and share that knowledge with customers. As compared to one-stop shopping, this

approach simplifies the process for your customer. (Call it one-stop solutions, if you will.)

As a member of the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) ([www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)) and the Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC), ([www.healthyschoolscampaign.org](http://www.healthyschoolscampaign.org)), both not-for-profit organizations, I have served on several advocacy committees. Considering the research gained, it is apparent there are still many customers who will benefit from both information and policies. Green experts will be in demand for some time to come. Both the USGBC and HSC will be the much needed agencies whose standards we will follow in the coming years.

Using USGBC's LEED Resource Guide, DSRs will discover there is a six-part system to define and measure Green buildings. They are: Sustainable Sites, Water Efficiency, Energy and Atmosphere, Materials and Resources, Indoor Environmental Quality and Innovation in Operations. Each of the parts contributes to mandatory prerequisites and optional credits that earn points toward certification.

Most of the credits earned for Green cleaning come from the Indoor Environmental Quality Section. This is where the opportunity exists to break away from just Green cleaning. For example, showing a building owner how to adopt an Alternative Commuting Plan will benefit the owner and occupants and earn 3 to 15 points toward certification. Although not Green cleaning, per se, this approach helps from a holistic environmental standpoint. The DSR who knows how to write the plan will benefit.

Under Materials and Resources, DSRs can demonstrate how to develop sustainable purchasing policies for ongoing consumables, durable goods, food, etc. They are all worth certification points and they are not compli-

cated. Even the landscape and hardscape have opportunities for points. Again, who would ever expect that the cleaning supply DSR would know about LEED credits outside of his area of expertise, much less want to be of help.

When a building decides to go Green, whether new construction or an existing building, a project team called a charrette is formed. This is when the DSR should become involved. Serving on that team will distinguish any DSR from the competition. The team decides how much they can afford and who is going to do what based on finances and particulars specific to the project. The HVAC rep presents his plan, the plumber his plan and so on until all facets of the building are covered. The viability of all parts is discussed, and the decision is made regarding what level of certification to pursue. If, in

fact, it is decided to not pursue any certification, for financial reasons, etc., it is still possible to have the building go "Greener." Although this will not achieve any certification from LEED, improvements surrounding health sustainability and environment can be made to the site. Having been a part of either process will certainly make the DSR more memorable and valuable to the owner (customer).

At first, this much information may seem a bit daunting. It is not. USGBC has announced a new credential called the LEED Associate. To research the credential, look at the website ([www.USGBC.org](http://www.USGBC.org)) and follow the LEED options. You will find that the credential is achievable and might prove to be very valuable. With this credential, the DSR will be able to interpret and participate in Greening buildings.

For a school specific market, consider Healthy Schools Campaign as a notable resource. Their *Quick and Easy Guide to Green Cleaning Schools* is vast in information and designed with the end user in mind. Authored by Stephen Ashkin, it is a must-have tool for improving the health of schools and occupants. How to form a Green Team, implementing Integrated Pest Management Programs and developing Green Policy are just a few examples of information included in the guide.

Being able to understand and implement "holistic" Green concepts for a building is valuable. Being able to show the customer how to get there is timely. Closing the Green gap is essential. Having and using integrative selling may be the tool that makes your company more sustainable. MS