

The President's Message

Advocacy is at the Core of What Keeps FEDA Relevant



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As we continue our efforts to focus on leadership transition, strategic initiatives and industry collaboration, one significant item continues to place itself at the forefront of many urgent conversations—dealer advocacy.

Before I dive into this, one thing is certain: Our world and means of doing business is changing at a rate that continues to surprise some of us. In my opinion, it is critical for every FEDA member to ask themselves if they are creating the value that our customers are demanding and will pay for. More importantly, if not now, when?

As end users continue to seek better ways to procure equipment and supplies, the notion of dealer-based distribution is being challenged more than ever. This can range from them pressuring our supply partners to sell direct and strip dealer margin from the transaction to alternatively asking for a more efficient distribution partner to expedite procurement and reduce costs.

While neither of these are new problems, the time is now for FEDA dealers to act strategically and quickly to thwart threats. I will focus on two areas that every dealer can get involved in at the grass roots level, starting with pairing the appropriate services with the right customer.

We need to take a serious look at how we can engage our customers in a proactive dialogue so we can thoroughly understand how we can help them meet their ever-changing needs. This step requires admitting that change is required and that our business model, as we know it today, may have to be retooled. Many of our customers do not understand the entire value chain and, quite frankly, some may not want all the services that we believe are relevant and necessary.

Within our channel, the services we

provide can vary significantly from one dealer to the next. From design build, consulting, fulfillment, contract bid, smallwares replenishment, e-commerce, showroom sales, etc., many of us approach the market in a different way, delivering what we each perceive as added value. When is the last time you asked your customers about their pain points? What do they need to become more efficient? What about more profitable?

When is that last time they told you and you chose to ignore them because it was not consistent with your current business model? If you actively asked, listened and developed a plan to differentiate your value, stop reading. Otherwise, roll up your sleeves or you may be faced with another competitor who is ready to respond.

The second area in which individual dealers can advocate for their role/value in the channel is by actively engaging their critical supply chain partners in a dialogue regarding how they can work together to serve the mutual customer. Remind them of the services we offer and ask how we can better serve our markets. In addition, encourage your supplier partners to reach out to you when they're approached by other entities that believe they can better service the market. Those truly committed to partnership will give you the opportunity to react to demands from end users or from alternative distributors.

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Schmitt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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shelving lost by reducing the top shelves, offer to repurpose the surplus shelving using new uprights. In some locations, you may be able to convert the shelving to high-density (track) shelving, which will provide even greater storage capacity in the same area as the extra high shelving it replaced.

There is a risk with cooking/baking equipment that has a top shelf higher than eye level for a 5-foot person. There have been a number of serious injuries resulting from employees trying to remove a pan from the top shelf of a steamer or combi oven. Be leery of triple-stacked ovens or stacking two 10-pan combi ovens. Pans on the top shelf are impossible for most people to view, so they carry a high risk of tilting and dumping hot food on the operator. Consider that employees' heights can range from 56 to 78 inches, and that their proportionally different arm reach to retrieve stored items will be a factor.

Poorly located over-shelves, pot racks, fire suppression nozzles, and tanks that protrude into the work or circulation space can lead to eye/head injuries or dislocated shoulders.

Areas that require frequent ladder access should not be located in busy hallways, doorways, slopes, or ramps. If this isn't possible, consider adding a fixed ladder bolted to the wall. This preventive measure will protect against unnecessary falls.

Many of the risks hidden in your customers' kitchens can be

eliminated by a thorough safety audit of all work and storage areas during the design phase, or in a tour of existing facilities. These kinds of preventive reviews save time and money and a lot of potential pain and suffering. Generate customer loyalty by offering safety audits as part of new equipment installations or existing kitchen renovations. □

President's Message continued

FEDA's Role

While we are working to listen and probe and actively respond to channel demands, FEDA will be proactively working on a new strategic initiative to bolster these efforts and, ultimately, elevate the dealer's role within the channel. The Executive Committee and board are committed to crafting a more strategic vision to move FEDA from a reactive form of advocacy to one that is much more proactive and strategic. This plan is currently being developed with feedback from many of our members, and will be reviewed this year for final planning and execution in late 2017.

Should you have any thoughts or suggestions on this initiative, please feel free to email either myself or FEDA's Deputy Executive Vice President Tracy Mulqueen (Tracey@Fedacom). □

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