

COUNSELOR

Person of the Year: The Distributor Salesperson

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2009 Person Of The Year

What one employee has the ability to single-handedly turn a company's fortunes around? What type of person can stare defeat in the face and laugh? Who can be creative enough to look at a nearly-evaporated client budget and still figure out a way to get a piece of it?

The one person in every organization who can do all of these things: the salesperson. It's the special man or woman who is in the field every day, speaking to clients, battling the economic elements on an hourly basis and stabilizing revenues at companies across the country.

There's an old saying that nothing can happen in business until an item is sold. It's never been more true than it is right now. At an unprecedented time in the history of the ad specialty industry, we've chosen 2009 to honor The Distributor Salesperson as the Counselor Person of the Year.

When we set out to identify the winner of this award each year, we look for people who are currently having a profound impact on the market. We try to find individuals who are approaching business in a unique way – and are succeeding with it. We seek out candidates who are affecting the way business is done in the industry, overcoming challenges and setting a course for the market to follow.

What better person is there right now to fit those criteria than the distributor salesperson?

Of course, finding just one standout sales rep in the industry is impossible. So we identified 10 specific characteristics that make up a great salesperson. From passion, tenacity and creativity to resiliency, sincerity and organization, these are the traits that top salespeople epitomize every day. And it takes all of these distinctive abilities to succeed today.

And, let's not forget loyalty. With the intense recruiting battles waged in this market for the best distributor salespeople, you couldn't possibly put a list of qualities together that relate to salespeople without touching on loyalty. After all, top salespeople are only going to help their current companies through an economic downturn if they remain at those distributor organizations.

We've identified one highly successful distributor salesperson who exemplifies each of these specific personality traits. On the following pages, we offer a profile of each; they're part of a group of 10 distributor reps that if put together would surely create the top salesperson in the industry. It would definitely be a person worthy of our Person of the Year award. And, it'd be somebody who would undoubtedly have a lasting influence on the ad specialty market.



Empathy: Chris Hartley, iPROMOTEu

For a quasi-Halloween party at a networking event a few years ago, Chris Hartley found herself in the unusual position of needing an idea. She wondered what costume would be a good fit for her. That's when a coworker made a particularly helpful and spot-on suggestion. "I was told that I should wear a tiara," Hartley recalls. Since that party where she literally wielded a wand, Hartley has been dubbed "the queen of the quick turnaround." It's a status that she now embraces.

"There's a large percentage of fly-by-night operations and a high turnover of people in this business," says Hartley, owner of MCM Productions an affiliate iPROMOTEu (asi/232119). "I try to find solutions. I'm not out to make the 'deal of the day.'"

Known for having empathy for her client's predicaments, Hartley accepts challenging orders that others would either pass up or fail to deliver on. In one case, a client called Hartley on a Friday and wanted a handful of T-shirts for a trade show in Prague. The problem? The client needed the shirts to be customized, packaged and delivered in less than one week. Unfazed, Hartley got on the phone and got to work. "In 30 minutes the deal was put together," she says. "The shirts were there by Wednesday night."

In another case, a customer needed branded hats for a New York Stock Exchange photo op. This time, Hartley faced a deadline that was only a couple of days away. But again, she came through.

Clients can tell Hartley cares. Amy Buntel, marketing coordinator for Massachusetts-based KIVA Systems, has enlisted Hartley's help for dozens of projects over the last decade. "You call Chris and it happens," Buntel says. "She's not like some people that you find yourself chasing down."

Creating a perfect product match, Hartley recommended KIVA market its rapidly-growing brand with squeeze bots. The idea has been a promotional hit. "People even take the bots on vacation and then send us pictures," Buntel says, almost in disbelief.

Hartley remains serious about her goal to constantly improve her connection to clients. Offering a newsletter, a business blog and a bevy of educational resources, Hartley refuses to give up her crown. "I love what I'm doing," she says. – DV