

Service: Untapped Opportunities

How valuable would it be to have a direct link to your end user customer that provides additional sales opportunities and invaluable feedback for your business?

In contrast to residential goods where marketing strategies typically target the end-users directly, the marketing of commercial and industrial products deals more frequently with the in-between specifiers such as architects, designers, consultants or contractors. For these commercial/industrial products, the end-user is often the last link of the trade chain. There is risk for manufacturers to lose sight of the latest market changes or miss valuable users' feedback.

Fortunately there is one department within most manufacturing companies which remains in frequent and direct contact with the end users: *the after-sales Service department.*

Too often corporate management fails to appreciate in-field service technicians are ambassadors of the company and frequently have a more direct and meaningful relationship with the end user than any commercial sales representatives. When supported by management, in-field service technicians can create a significant differentiation from competition and a significant opportunity for additional business.

The service profession is too often perceived by junior employees as a job of lower visibility or somewhat less glamorous than jobs in finance or sales. On the other hand, senior management may tend to view the service business as a short term cash cow rather than a long term relationship building opportunity. These two caricatural visions are of course totally wrong and can be quite costly to the business.

Service techs return tangible technical feedback, important for the quality and R&D departments. They can also provide valuable end-users' perceptions, both good and bad, on the company, its products and business operation. When properly trained and empowered, Service technicians can make strong contributions with their attitude, ability to listen, and empathy to develop and reinforce a positive image of the company.

This Service Attitude is of special importance in mature markets where replacement business represents an increasing share of the activity, and when technical differentiation of equipment with competition tend to become less and less a significant selling advantage.

Professional Service is a true opportunity of business development and differentiation for the companies who understand its marketing power. It is also a great opportunity of personal self development for the individuals who

- enjoy the challenge of working away from office routines,
- like meeting different people in different locations,
- are curious of different industries and working environments.

For these individuals the personal satisfaction and job security of becoming a recognized and highly sought professional is an additional reward of Service.

“Service is not a department it is an Attitude”

Jean Paul Thierion
GEA Consulting

38 years of field sales and service experience with Trane AmStd, Hitachi and Dow Chemical. Extensive global management experience ranging from General Manager of Trane Thailand, Manager of ServiceFirst for Europe/Mid-East/Africa and Director of Global Accounts for Trane Europe.
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