



Less hassle. Less headaches.

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By ROB KIRKBRIDE



When people ask why certain manufacturers or companies in the industry are succeeding or failing, the answer is usually quite simple: Those that are supporting the dealer community best are prospering; those that don't show the same level of care to their dealers are failing.

A simple axiom in this industry should be: Help the dealers succeed and they will help you. EthoSource, the Morgantown, Penn. refurbishing company that specializes in redone Herman Miller Ethospace, recently launched a new and improved dealer program focused on making the sale of its products easier.

The new and renewed dealer program is focused on creating a straightforward, cost-effective way that simplifies the process of selling EthoSource products. The program is outlined in a newly published dealer guide that provides all the necessary tools and information for dealer sales representatives to present EthoSource products.

The guide fittingly begins with a simple promise: Less hassle. Less headaches. More profit. Get EthoSource into the mix and dealers can expect more furniture sales at higher margins. "It is more defined, more focused and it is an easier to use tool," said Bryon Kauffman, vice president of sales. "Along with this, we had a price reduction."

Much of the new dealer program and dealer guide revolves around streamlining the sales process for the dealer sales rep and EthoSource. EthoSource found that it was doing a lot of work to manage the initial interaction on potential jobs. Though it certainly wants interaction with its customers, the new program and guide outlines its capabilities and offerings

and positions the process as a precursor to the real engagement needed when a project begins moving through the pipeline.

The program and guide outline products, fabrics, finishes, typicals, refurbishing programs, add-on accessories, tools, services, parts and warranty information so when a customer is ready to move forward, the information is already in the dealer sales rep's hands. "The projects are 30 yards down the field before they even engage," Kauffman said.

The program and guide was designed with the dealer in mind. Simplicity is at the forefront and the company created the program after studying what sales reps need. It is something they can put before their customers without it being complicated.

"If you are a customer, what do need to know? We put ourselves in the shoes of the dealer and tried to capture what they needed in a guide," Kauffman said. "Some of it has to happen through conversations, obviously, but we wanted to whittle it down to the nuts and bolts. We thought about what is important to dealers, which is very customer-focused since our dealers are our customers."

The program and guide were needed also because impressions about EthoSource have changed. Since the companies capabilities continue to expand, it needed to explain that to its customers. "There are fewer people (dealing in) used furniture and the ones like us that are still around are larger organizations," said John Gallen, president and owner.

The program and guide were created to give the dealer the ability to provide a professional, pre-owned solution to their



customer on the spot. The dealer program lets the dealer present typicals, fabric and finish options, as well as pricing to their customer without ever having to pick up the phone or email EthoSource.

"With pre-owned products, there are a lot of advantage and benefits for the dealer," Gallen said. "We know dealers might have a line they have to be out there selling and promoting. But if they get a lead, when they are having an initial discussion, they know where their manufacturer brand fits in and now they will be able to know where preowned from EthoSource fits in."

Gallen said EthoSource thinks of itself as a manufacturer. And why not? Even at the company's Level 1 Economy service, it uses quality, pre-owned Herman Miller Ethospace that is inspected and cleaned, professionally laid out to a specific floor plan with complete design and space planning support. At Level 2 Standard, the company adds new fabric to the workstation, includes new and/or painted pedestals and new and/or painted trim pieces. At the Level 3 Premium, new worksurfaces are added and customers choose the colors and finishes of all the products.

Because of continued tight corporate budgets, many customers are asking dealers for other, less costly options for office furniture. "Because of that, the architecture and design community is not turning their noses up since the requests are coming from their biggest customers," Gallen said.

The process outlined in the guide is simple: The dealer identifies a sales opportunity; they use the EthoSource guide to explain workstation typicals; the dealer sends the floor plan

to EthoSource; EthoSource creates a solution with complimentary design services, space planning, 3D and plain view drawings and detailed pricing; and the dealer presents EthoSource's solution to the customer.

"The customer can choose new fabrics, new finishes, new worksurfaces," Kauffman said. "A lot of it is new. This is allowing (the dealer) to make more money and do less work. Some dealer sales reps are not especially experts in systems furniture. Many have come from other industries and it takes time to learn the intricacies of systems products. We take a lot of that on us. If you identify the opportunity, we can come up with a high quality product. We want to get the dealers out of that grind and let them quote something that is a unique value proposition that they can make money on."

EthoSource also has a green story since the products are recycled Ethospace. The furniture, which is built like a tank, can last a long time and looks like new when it is refurbished. Since Ethospace is so flexible, it can be used to create traditional cubicles and more contemporary benching. And there is still a lot of it on the market. EthoSource has a huge warehouse filled with the product and Gallen said the company is constantly adding to its inventory.

EthoSource is not stopping with the program and the guide. The company is revamping its website with a "self-service" dealer portal, which is expected to be in place this summer. Smartphone and tablet apps are scheduled to launch in the fall providing access to all dealer program materials and live inventory. 