



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTORS

Smart Tools for Smart Distribution.™



Product Introductions:

*Recommended Best Practices in
Planning a Successful Product Launch*

Prepared for the membership of NAED
by the Product Introduction Task Force



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NAED's Mission

The National Association of Electrical Distributors (NAED) is the voice of electrical distribution, providing members with the best in tools, information, and assistance to help them thrive financially and to improve the electrical distribution channel. This is accomplished through networking, advocacy, education, and defined standards.

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Scope of Document

PRODUCT INTRODUCTION:
*Recommended Best Practices in
Planning a Successful Product Launch*

This compilation is designed to facilitate a dialogue among individual distributors and the manufacturers who supply products to them for the purposes of making the product introduction process more efficient and reducing the costs for all parties involved. It is not intended to express any views regarding individual distributors' or manufacturers' business decisions regarding new product introductions. Nor is this process intended to facilitate discussions between distributors, or between manufacturers, regarding resale prices, margins or other competitive issues. All distributors and manufacturers will continue to make their own independent decisions regarding all matters affecting competition.

GOAL OF NAED'S PRODUCT INTRODUCTION TASK FORCE

The task force established the goal of developing a more effective communication and coordinated implementation process in order to provide a more efficient product introduction process for all parties involved.

DEDICATION

Thanks to All of Our Industry Volunteers

This White Paper, "*Recommended Best Practices in Planning a Successful Product Launch*," is the result of an industry effort! Both distributors and manufacturers were involved in its development. Besides participating in a face-to-face meeting in Chicago at their companies' expense, countless hours have been volunteered to improve the product introduction process to make it more efficient for all channel partners.

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NAED's general counsel, Ron Rucker, or his partner, Leo MacDonald, Jr., provided legal guidance during each conference call and the face-to-face meeting. Legal guidance was also provided by Sanford M. Pastroff, formerly of Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP.

The work of the Product Introductions Task Force was formally endorsed by NAED's Board of Directors on September 28, 2007.

The task force would like to recognize the contribution of the white paper, "*GUIDELINES for Marketing Promotions and Product Launches*," which was published by NEMRA, in conjunction with its Manufacturers' Group, in 2006. NEMRA's white paper is a very thorough review of the new product introduction process from the viewpoint of independent sales representatives and the manufacturers who sell through independent sales representatives.

The development of the Recommended Industry Vocabulary on Page 12 is based on foundational work by the American Marketing Association (AMA) and the Product Development Management Association (PDMA).

“*NEMRA has reviewed this white paper and is pleased that it adds the distributor component to the introduction of new products into the electrical distribution channel.*”

- HANK BERGSON
PRESIDENT, NEMRA



Introduction

PRODUCT INTRODUCTION:

*Recommended Best Practices in
Planning a Successful Product Launch*

New products are viewed as the lifeblood of business, with many manufacturers targeting as much as 20% of annual sales to be generated by newly introduced products. To meet this goal, electrical manufacturers spend millions of dollars every year on new product development to ensure a continual flow of new products into the marketplace. Yet many manufacturers have not successfully mastered the process of launching the new products into the electrical industry.

COMMUNICATIONS KEY

Successful product introductions require the people introducing new products into the marketplace—*product development, the manufacturer’s sales force, and electrical distributor*—communicate and coordinate their efforts. Effective communication is defined as two-way communication—*based on listening to and learning from each other*. Unfortunately, many channel partners often work in a vacuum with little or no interaction or understanding of the goals, roles, information requirements, and contributions of their channel partners.

Listed below is a summary of items deemed important to the successful product introduction by many channel partners.¹

Distributors NEED:²

- ✓ Advance notice of the product introduction
- ✓ Product available for shipment
- ✓ Data elements for electronic data files, catalogs, etc.
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Printed literature & merchandising
- ✓ Information on the manufacturers’ Website
- ✓ Product samples and demo kits to aid in the selling efforts

Distributors Want:³

- ✓ Market opportunity information
- ✓ Advertising campaigns run by the manufacturers to build end-customer awareness
- ✓ Plan for after sale support to the distributor and end-customers
- ✓ Testimonials from satisfied end-customers
- ✓ Incentives to encourage investment of time and inventory
- ✓ Definitions of success
- ✓ Feedback loop to review what worked and didn’t work

Manufacturers NEED:

- ✓ To reduce the number of days it takes a new product to become profitable
- ✓ To understand how to best use their resources with distributors
- ✓ Their marketing personnel to have direct relationships with distributors

Manufacturers Want:

- ✓ Feedback from distributors on the issues uncovered during their interactions with end-customers
- ✓ Point-of-Sales (POS) data with the end-customers four-digit SIC/NAICS attached so new product adoption rates can be tracked

¹To discover what is important to your channel partners, it is recommended that you ask. Then listen to the answer.

²Information listed as “needed” is considered requisite for success.

³Information listed as “wanted” will help make the product introduction more successful.

This white paper focuses on the task force's goal to achieve more effective communications and coordinated implementation to make the new product introduction process more efficient for all parties involved. And while much has been written about the tactical details of launching products, this white paper provides a framework for decoding the complexity of product introductions by offering insight into three secrets to a successful product introduction that occur at the beginning of the process—

IDENTIFYING THE COMPLEXITY OF
THE PRODUCT INTRODUCTION;

1

UNDERSTANDING THE DISTRIBUTOR
DECISION PROCESS; AND

2

ACHIEVING BUY-IN THROUGHOUT
THE DISTRIBUTOR'S ORGANIZATION.

3

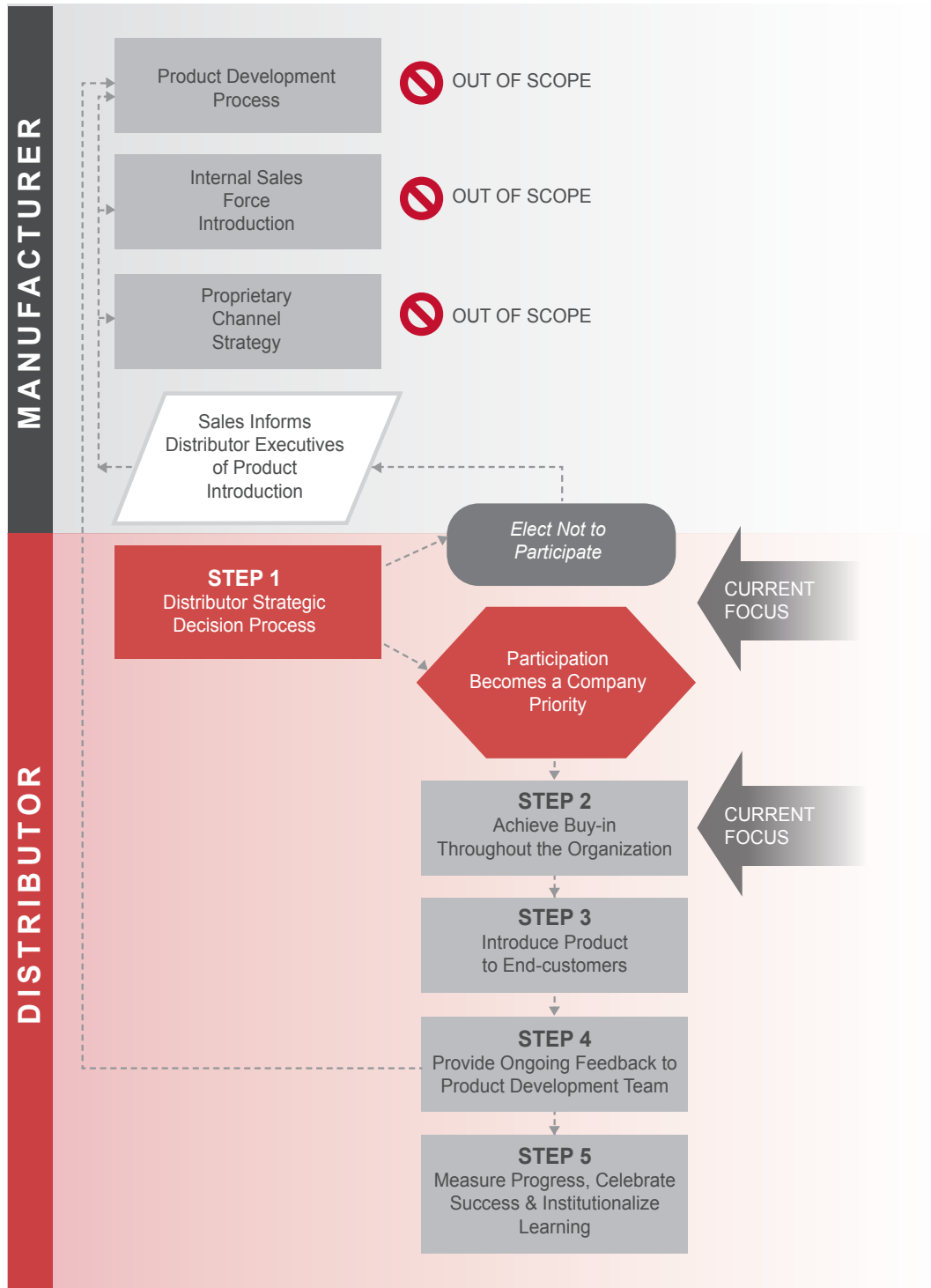


Product Introduction Process

PRODUCT INTRODUCTION:
*Recommended Best Practices in
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PRODUCT INTRODUCTION PROCESS

While each manufacturer and distributor may approach product introductions differently, the general process is illustrated below.



WHAT IS A “NEW” PRODUCT?

Products introduced as “NEW” in the electrical industry run the gamut from products never available anywhere before; products that are almost, but not quite, “me too” imitations of another manufacturer’s product; products to which additional features have been added; and products repackaged for promotional or repositioning purposes. Confusing? You bet. A product may be “NEW” to the company marketing it, but distributors and end-customers may not hold the same opinion.

To end the confusion, a more holistic and customer focused approach is required. Because only by focusing on “who” views the product as “new” can both manufacturers and distributors work together more effectively to decrease the time and cost of introducing new products. As a result, the task force developed definitions for five types of product introductions:

- “NEW” Product
- Product “NEW” to the Electrical Distribution Channel
- Manufacturer’s Brand Extension
- Manufacturer’s Line Extension
- Distributor’s Line Card Extension

The task force defines a “NEW” product as a product that is the first of its kind that creates a new product category, i.e., the product is new to the market, new to all channels (including electrical distribution), new to all manufacturers, new to electrical distributors, and new to customers. In customizing this definition for the electrical industry, the task force relied on definitions of “First-to-Market” and “New-to-the World Product” from the Product Development and Management Association. Based on this recommend definition, the number of truly new products distributors will be asked to introduce in a year will be in the single digits.

A product “**New to the Electrical Distribution Channel**” is a product that manufacturers have previously sold through channels other than electrical distribution. And since the product is new to electrical distributors, but not end-customers, product introduction efforts will focus more on the power of relationships than on product features.

The definition of a **Manufacturer’s Brand Extension** originates from the American Marketing Association. The task force defines a Manufacturer’s Brand Extension as a single product, or an entire product category, “new” to a particular manufacturer; and while the manufacturer’s brand is known, the manufacturer is not historically known for selling this type of product. An example of a Manufacturer’s Brand Extension is FedEx Kinko’s. Although well known as a shipping firm with overnight delivery capabilities, FedEx expanded its brand into office and print services when it acquired Kinko’s in February 2004.

The definition of **Manufacturer’s Line Extension** also originates from the American Marketing Association. The task force defines a Manufacturer’s Line Extension as a product identical in form, fit, and function to a manufacturer’s current product to which modifications or improvements have been made or additional features added. And while this type of product has been historically referred to as “New and Improved” in the electrical distribution industry, the modifications, incremental improvements, and/or additional features may or may not be deemed of significant value by customers to risk changing.

A **Distributor’s Line Card Extension** is a brand, product, or line of products that is “new” to a particular electrical distributor or a distributor branch location.

DEFINITIONS:

New Product

A product that is the first of its kind that creates a new product category, i.e., the product is new to the market, new to the channels (including electrical distribution), new to all manufacturers, new to the company marketing it, new to electrical distributors, and new to CUSTOMERS. Example of a “New” Product: The Segway Human Transporter, the self-balanced electric people mover, when it was introduced in 2003.

Product “New” to the Electrical Distribution Channel

A product manufacturers previously have sold through channels other than electrical distribution.

Manufacturer’s Brand Extension

A single product, or an entire product category, “new” to a particular manufacturer; i.e., this manufacturer is not historically known for selling this type of product.

Manufacturer’s Line Extension

A product identical in form, fit, and function to a manufacturer’s current product to which modifications or improvements have been made or additional features added.

Distributor’s Line Card Extension

A brand, product, or line of products that is “new” to a particular electrical distributor or a distributor branch location.

HIERARCHY OF PRODUCT INTRODUCTIONS

The differences between the five most common types of product introductions in the electrical distribution industry are summarized in the Hierarchy of Product Introductions below. The hierarchy incorporates the viewpoints of all stakeholders in the product introduction process—the market, the channel, manufacturers, distributors, and customers.

	MARKET	ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL	MANUFACTURER	ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTOR	CUSTOMER
“NEW” PRODUCT	A “New” product is NEW to the Market—the first of its kind that creates a new product category.	A “New” product is “NEW” to the Electrical Distribution Channel.	A “New” product is “NEW” to all manufacturers.	A “New” product is “NEW” to all electrical distributors.	A “New” product is “NEW” to all customers.
PRODUCT “NEW” TO THE ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL		The product is “NEW” to the electrical distribution channel.	The manufacturer previously sold the product through other channels.	The product is “NEW” to all electrical distributors.	Customers currently purchase the product from another channel.
MANUFACTURER’S BRAND EXTENSION			A “Manufacturer’s Brand Extension” is a single product or an entire product category “NEW” to a particular manufacturer, i.e., this manufacturer is not historically known for selling this type of product.	A “Manufacturer’s Brand Extension” may or may not be considered a “NEW” product by a particular electrical distributor.	Customers currently purchase another manufacturer’s product through electrical distribution and perhaps even from this particular electrical distributor.
MANUFACTURER’S LINE EXTENSION			A “Manufacturer’s Line Extension” is a product identical in form, fit, and function to a manufacturer’s current product to which modifications, incremental improvements, or additional features have been added.	The modifications, incremental improvements, and/or additional features of a “Manufacturer’s Line Extension” may or may not be considered a “NEW” product by a particular electrical distributor.	The modifications, incremental improvements, and/or additional features of a “Manufacturer’s Line Extension” may or may not be considered a “NEW” product by customers.
DISTRIBUTOR’S LINE CARD EXTENSION			A “Distributor’s Line Card Extension” is an additional way for a particular manufacturer to reach customers.	A “Distributor’s Line Card Extension” is a brand, product, or line of products “NEW” to that particular electrical distributor.	Customers currently purchase the product or line of products from another electrical distributor.

Focusing on “who” views the product as “new” enables both manufacturers and distributors to work together more effectively and reduce costs for all parties involved by matching implementation tactics to the efforts required to influence the adoption cycle of customers, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

RECOMMENDED INDUSTRY VOCABULARY



<p>DISTRIBUTOR'S LINE CARD EXTENSION</p>	<p>A brand, product, or line of products that is “new” to a particular electrical distributor or a distributor branch location.</p>
<p>MANUFACTURER'S BRAND EXTENSION</p>	<p>A single product, or an entire product category, “new” to a particular manufacturer, i.e., this manufacturer is not historically known for selling this product type.</p> <p><i>Example of a Brand Extension: FedEx, previously known as a shipping firm with overnight delivery capabilities, acquired Kinko's in February 2004 and expanded the FedEx brand into office and print services.</i></p>
<p>MANUFACTURER'S LINE EXTENSION</p>	<p>A product identical in form, fit, and function to a manufacturer's current product to which modifications or improvements have been made or additional features added. <i>(Historically referred to as “New and Improved” in the electrical distribution industry).</i></p>
<p>NEW PRODUCT</p>	<p>A product that is the first of its kind that creates a new product category, i.e., the product is new to the market, new to all channels (including electrical distribution), new to all manufacturers, new to the company marketing it, new to electrical distributors, and new to customers.</p> <p><i>Example of a “New” Product: The Segway Human Transporter, the self-balanced electric people mover, when it was introduced in 2003.</i></p>
<p>PRODUCT INTRODUCTION DATE</p>	<p>The date public advertising for the product begins.</p>
<p>PRODUCT “NEW” TO THE ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL</p>	<p>A product manufacturers previously have sold through channels other than electrical distribution.</p>

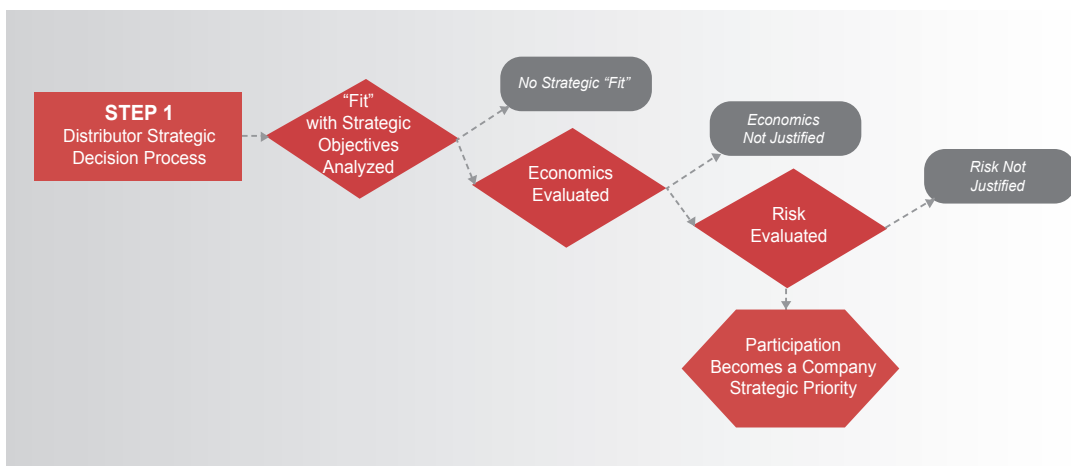
UNDERSTANDING THE DISTRIBUTOR DECISION PROCESS

Current Situation

A vital component of a successful product introduction is the commitment and buy-in of a distributor's executives. This requires someone at the top of the distributor's organization to decide to make the product introduction a strategic priority.

There can be two parts to the decision making process—one analytical, the other subjective. Some electrical distributors have formal approval processes for introducing products at the company and branch level; at others, the decision process often depends on a subjective evaluation of the nature of the relationship with an individual manufacturers and the level of trust between channel partners.

DISTRIBUTOR STRATEGIC DECISION PROCESS



Recommended Best Practice

Manufacturers:

Ascertain the approval process for introducing new products at the company and branch level for each of your distributors.

- ✓ If there is a formal approval process for introducing new products, please work within this framework.

Distributors:

Convey your company's approval process (if one exists) for introducing new products within your own company and to your suppliers.

- ✓ If your company does not have a formal process for introducing new products, consider developing one to improve communications and coordination with manufacturers.

OBTAINING EXECUTIVE COMMITMENT AND BUY-IN

Current Situation

A commitment of company resources by distributor executives is crucial to an effective, coordinated, and successful product launch, especially if it has a major impact on the distributor's strategic business initiatives. Yet many manufacturers rely on grass roots efforts to launch products and expect electrical distributors to move ahead on the manufacturer's predetermined schedule. But expecting active support with little or no prior input or advance notice creates friction, and sometimes even chaos, when a new product introduction is suddenly superimposed on an electrical distributor's existing business plans.

While every distributor is unique, the buy-in, commitment, and active support of distributor executives usually includes an evaluation of:

- 1** THE "FIT" OF THE PRODUCT WITH THE DISTRIBUTOR COMPANY'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES;
- 2** ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION TO STOCK THE PRODUCT, I.E., THE RETURN ON THE DISTRIBUTOR'S INVESTMENT; AND
- 3** AN ASSESSMENT OF THE DISTRIBUTOR'S RISK.

Recommended Best Practice

Manufacturers:

Provide distributors with all of the information¹ required to make a decision regarding participating in the product introduction at least six weeks in advance of your planned introduction date, including, but not limited to:

Information to evaluate the "fit" of the product with the distributor's strategic objectives—

- ✓ Why the new product is being introduced;
- ✓ What the new product does for customers;
- ✓ Who the competition is;
- ✓ Standards with which the product complies;
- ✓ Target Audience; and
- ✓ End-User Advertising Schedule.

Information for the economic justification of stocking the product—

- ✓ Estimated market size;
- ✓ Pricing Information;
- ✓ Upsell and Cross Sell Opportunities; and
- ✓ Complementary products that can be sold with this product.

Information to assess the risk the distributor is assuming—

- ✓ Transition plan for disposition of product being replaced;
- ✓ Schedule of manufacturing;
- ✓ Estimated product availability date;
- ✓ Inventory plans;
- ✓ Shelf space requirements;
- ✓ Estimated lead times;
- ✓ Terms and Conditions for product (if different from standard T&Cs)
- ✓ Invoice dating policy for product (if different from standard policy) and;
- ✓ Return policy for product (if different from standard policy)

Distributors:

Please review the information provided in a timely fashion.

- ✓ Notify the manufacturer of your decision no later than four weeks after the receipt of information.
- ✓ Modify your annual business plan as required to reflect the strategic impact of the product launch on your business.

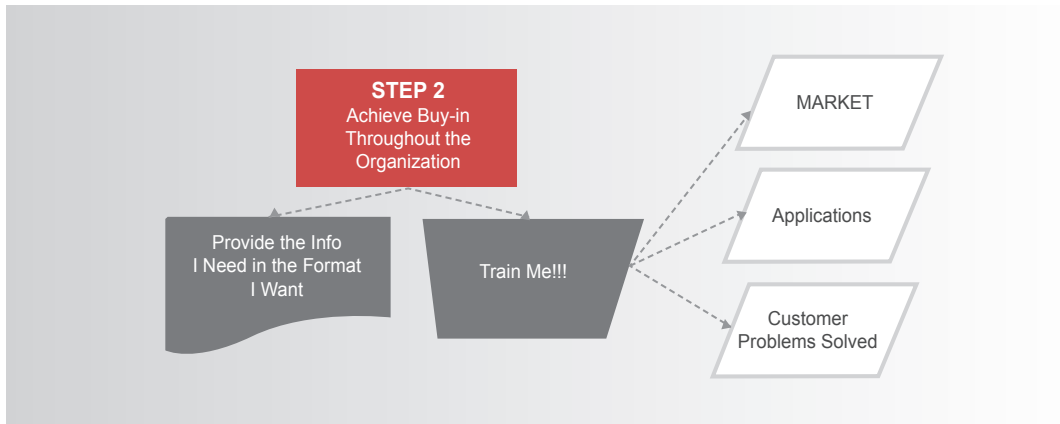
¹See Appendix I for a listing of recommended information to be provided.

ACHIEVING BUY-IN THROUGHOUT THE DISTRIBUTOR'S ORGANIZATION

Current Situation

After buy-in is obtained from distributor executives, many manufacturers focus their efforts on training the distributor's sales force on the features, functions, and benefits of the product with little regard to the impact of the product introduction on the balance of the distributor's organization.

ACHIEVING BUY-IN THROUGHOUT THE ORGANIZATION



Recommended Best Practice

While training the distributor's sales force is a crucial component to a successful product launch, it is not the only component. To achieve buy-in organization-wide, the distributor's ENTIRE organization—including marketing, purchasing, information technology, and warehousing—must receive the information needed to fulfill their individual roles in the product introduction.

Manufacturers:

Provide the ENTIRE distributor organization with all the information¹ pertinent to their position at least four weeks in advance of your planned introduction date.

- ✓ To optimize your resources, consider sending a checklist of collateral material available for the product launch at least four weeks in advance of your planned introduction date. This will allow each distributor to order the specific information their company requires in the quantities specific quantities needed.

Distributors:

If a checklist of collateral material is provided, please return the checklist to the manufacturer within 72 hours of receipt. This will ensure receipt of your collateral material in advance of the planned introduction date.

Manufacturers:

Please schedule sales meetings and training sessions on the product, its applications, and target audience at least four weeks in advance of the planned introduction date.

- ✓ It is recommended that separate sessions be offered based on the technical abilities of the attendees, i.e., the same training is not appropriate for counter sales people and application engineers.
- ✓ It is recommended that each session be offered multiple times to allow adequate customer coverage.

Distributors:

Please make your personnel available for sales meetings and product training.

¹See Appendix II for a listing of recommended information to be provided.



Appendices

PRODUCT INTRODUCTION:

*Recommended Best Practices in
Planning a Successful Product Launch*

APPENDIX I:

RECOMMENDED INFORMATION FOR STRATEGIC DECISION PROCESS

INFORMATION REQUIRED	Sales Executive	Marketing Executive	Distributor Operations Executive*
Step 1.a. Evaluation of "fit" of new product with distributor company	✓	✓	✓
Why new product is being introduced	✓	✓	✓
What the new product does for customers--- <i>problems solved, non-technical information on what the new product does, Features/Functions/Benefits, etc.</i>	✓	✓	
Who the competition is	✓	✓	
Standards product complies with (<i>UL, CSA, Rohas, etc.</i>)	✓		✓
Target Audience: <i>Industry information, trends, NAICS/SIC Codes, etc.</i>	✓	✓	✓
End-User Ad Schedule	✓	✓	✓
Step 1.b. Economic Justification for Distributor to Stock Product (ROI)	✓	✓	✓
Estimated market size (<i>Nationally and in distributor's market area</i>)	✓	✓	✓
Pricing Information including published list pricing and distributor-into-stock costs	✓	✓	✓

This section is intended to serve as a reminder that a Distributor may discuss economics, profitability measures, and distributor margin expectations in individual discussions with that manufacturer.

Distributors should not discuss economics, profitability measures, and margin expectations with other distributors, and all distributors and manufacturers will continue to make their own independent decision regarding these and other competitive issues.

Upsell/Cross Sell Opportunities	✓	✓	✓
Complementary products that can be sold with the new product, i.e., "Go Withs"	✓	✓	✓
Step 1.c. Assessment of Distributor's Risk	✓	✓	✓
Transition plan for disposition of product being replaced	✓	✓	✓
Schedule of manufacturing for new product	✓	✓	✓
Estimated Product Availability Date	✓	✓	✓
Inventory Plans: <i>factory, regional distribution centers, and locally</i>	✓	✓	✓
Shelf Space Requirements, i.e., "cube"	✓	✓	✓
Estimated Lead Times	✓	✓	✓
Plan for after-sale support to the distributor and end-customers	✓	✓	
Terms & Conditions for New Product <i>(If different from standard T&Cs)</i>	✓	✓	✓
Invoice Dating Policy for New Product <i>(If different from standard policy)</i>	✓		✓
Return Policy for New Product <i>(If different from standard policy)</i>	✓		✓

**Typically responsible for purchasing, inventory control, and information technology.*

APPENDIX II: RECOMMENDED INFORMATION FOR ORGANIZATION

Recommended Information Guide: Information Needed to Achieve Buy-In Throughout the Distributor's Organization

	DISTRIBUTOR SALES DEPARTMENT					DISTRIBUTOR OPERATIONS		
	Sales Manager	Outside Sales	Inside Sales	Counter Sales	Distributor Marketing	Purchasing	Inventory Control	Information Technology
	Email Notification of New Product	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Why new product is being introduced	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
What the new product does for customers— <i>problems solved, non-technical information on what the new product does, Features/Functions/Benefits, etc.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Who the competition is	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Standards product complies with (UL, CSA, Rohas, etc.)	✓	✓				✓		
Target Audience: <i>Industry information, trends, NAICS/SIC Codes, etc.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
End-User Ad Schedule	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Estimated market size (Nationally and in distributor's market area)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Pricing Information	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Printed Sales Literature	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Merchandising/Point-of-Purchase Displays <i>See comment A below</i>					← If merchandised →			
Upsell/Cross Sell Opportunities	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Complementary products that can be sold with the new product, i.e., "Go With's"	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Transition plan for disposition of product being replaced	✓				✓	✓	✓	
Schedule of manufacturing for new product	✓				✓	✓	✓	
Estimated Product Availability Date <i>See comment B below</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Inventory Plans: <i>factory, regional distribution centers, & locally</i>	✓				✓	✓	✓	
Shelf Space Requirements, i.e., "cube"					← If merchandised →		✓	
Estimated Lead Times	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Terms & Conditions for New Product (If different from standard T&Cs)	✓					✓		✓
Invoice Dating Policy for New Product (If different from standard policy)	✓					✓		✓
Return Policy for New Product (If different from standard policy)	✓					✓	✓	
Preview of End-User Awareness Campaign <i>See comment C below</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
End-User Promotion Details	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Product Samples/Demo Kits <i>See comment D below</i>	Awareness	✓	✓	✓	Awareness			
List of who else is stocking in geographic area	✓				✓	✓	✓	
Competitive Comparisons of New Product	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Technical Information on the Product	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Education: How to sell this product against the competition, how to train end-user, etc. <i>See comment E below</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Motivation to Sell, i.e., special sales incentives, etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Testimonials <i>See comment F below</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
UPC/GTIN Code <i>See comment G below</i>						✓		✓
Published Prices/Trade/List/User/Net	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Unit of Measure (Each, feet, pounds, etc.)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Standard & Special Package Quantity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Published Price data in IDW					✓	✓		✓
Enriched/catalog data in IDW					✓	✓		✓

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

a) Merchandising: Merchandising assistance or direction can be a critical aspect of the new product launch.

b) Product Availability: Determine stock requirements at the national, regional, and local levels. Have inventory on hand. (*It may seem obvious, but please make sure the product is available for shipment. Occasionally, distributors go through the process of planning an internal product introduction schedule and placing an order only to find out the product isn't available—and no one is sure when it will be available*). Review stock requirements every 90, 180, 365 days, etc. Recommendations for initial stock orders—including part numbers and quantities—are appreciated.

c) Awareness Campaign: Have a full scale marketing program in place. Plan activities that target end-users, i.e., market blitzes, involving not only the local supplier sales rep, but several support people from corporate.

d) Product Samples/Demo Kits: The best way to change buying habits is to give the customer a sample of the product. It is much easier to market a new product with an actual sample in hand as opposed to a brochure. Everyone loves to touch and feel to get a sense of quality.

e) Education/Training: Train your employees first—customer service reps at factory, factory reps and agents, etc. Consider Web-based training "Webinars" and on-line training via NAED's Learning Center. Provide educational presentations for distributor sales personnel to give to end-users.

f) Testimonials: Develop testimonials from test markets to demonstrate how the new product will drive incremental sales for the electrical distributor. And publish customer success stories as product adoption increases.

g) Master Product File Information: There are a number of key data elements that are required for the distributor to sell the product. Every distributor needs the Master Product File information entered into their computer before they can buy and sell the product. UPC/GTIN numbers are an absolute must. And make sure the Master Product File information is also available in IDW. Further information on IDW data requirements—including, "Product Catalog & Descriptive Field Guidelines," —is available @ www.idea-esolutions.com.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

What can you do to make sure *Product Introductions: Recommended Best Practices in Planning a Successful Product Launch* is up-to-date? Give us your feedback! Please contact NAED Customer Service at **1.888.791.2512** or email customerservice@naed.org.

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