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Brokers in Key Position

By CHRISTINA VEIDERS

Sales and marketing organizations have coalesced into a national force with a unique role in trading partner relations.



"We are really the in-between guy and have to have relationships on both sides and execute on both sides," said Sonny King, chief executive officer, Advantage Sales and Marketing, Irvine, Calif.


The amount of sales and customer data available to the agencies gives them a depth of insight no other party may have into retailer and supplier strategies. The agencies have the ability and resources to help both sides achieve their sell-through goals and tackle new business processes together.

"We provide suppliers greater understanding of retailers' strategies because of the knowledge, continuity [at retail] and depth of resources we have against the retailer. It gives us the ability to really know the customer [retailer] and what their strategies are," said Robert Hill, president and chief operating officer, Acosta Sales & Marketing, Jacksonville, Fla.

Category management analysis is an important process the agencies utilize. "Sales agencies have taken on a significant role in the [category management] process," said Chip O'Hare, president and CEO of Johnson O'Hare Co., Billerica, Mass. "Because of such relationships, the trust factor between the customer and the sales agencies is critical to the process."

Joe Crafton, president, strategic alliance, Crossmark, Plano, Texas, addressed his concerns about the "localization" movement last year in a GMA Forum publication. "I believe we are facing an even greater transformational event than the category management movement of the mid-'90s. This trend is 'localization,'" he said. Crafton put forth many questions on who will lead this strategy that customizes and clusters assortments and promotions by individual store market rather than the big buy for multiple stores across the chain. "We have the opportunity to get in front of the localization evolution - and collaborate to win," Crafton stated in the article.



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