

Maxtec seeks customers for life...

...and it relies on specialty distributors to help identify – and keep – them

Bruce Brierley, president of Salt Lake City, Utah-based Maxtec, has big expectations of hospitals: “Our goal is to make you a customer for life,” he says. Of course, Brierley understands that Maxtec has to hold up its end of the bargain by providing excellent products as well as superior service and responsiveness. It’s a “Nordstrom’s-style” approach to the market. And Maxtec relies on specialty distributors to help it deliver just that.

Serving the respiratory, anesthesia, neonatal, home care and biomedical markets (as well as scuba and industrial), Maxtec provides Max O2 A, and OM series oxygen analyzers, Micro Max blenders and Blender Buddy, Max Flo mixers, OEM oxygen sensors, pulse oximeters, and vent/flow support and accessories, such as its Smart Stack IV pole. The company offers a complete line of neonatal, infant and pediatric SpO2 sensors, oxygen analyzers and sensors, blenders, SuperDome and the Eye Max phototherapy mask.

“I started my career cleaning respiratory equipment and eventually became a respiratory therapist,” explains Brierley, who along with his wife, Mary, owns Maxtec. “I later entered into equipment sales, first in the home care market, and later, selling anesthesia machines, pulse oximeters and patient care monitors.” He founded Maxtec in July 2000

“We have found a great partnership with specialty salespeople, whose customers know them, believe in them, and would trust them in what is worth looking at,” he says.

The approach is working. In 2012, specialty distributors grew Maxtec’s sales 11 percent; by comparison, overall hospital sales were up 4 percent.

The need for speed

Though Maxtec relies on national distributors to sell some of its product lines, the company reserves a special spot for IMDA members. “For a business like Maxtec, which is dynamic, with new products to talk about, we need speed,” says Brierley. Being primarily local or regional in nature, IMDA members move quickly with new products and programs.

But it’s the established relationships that IMDA members have with local providers that provide the greatest advantage to Maxtec. “They have great

relationships in the hospitals,” says Specialty Business Manager Robert Messer. Messer recently traveled with one IMDA member’s rep in the New York area. “He’s been in that market for years,” says Messer. “Everyone knows him. They call him for big things and little things, because he has the knowledge and the expertise.”

“You see other salespeople waiting in line” to see customers, says Brierley. Not so often IMDA reps. “They can get in when others can’t.”

Making the relationship work

To be sure, working with specialty distributors carries rewards for manufacturers of innovative technologies. But it also carries responsibilities. For example, some IMDA members are better suited to sell capital equipment than others, says Brierley. That means Maxtec must do its homework to make sure each dealer has the right product mix. What’s more, understanding that Maxtec competes with other lines in the IMDA rep’s bag, the company does everything it can to capture distributor reps’ mindshare. “We have gotten creative over the years to be fun, grateful and interesting to do business with,” he says. “We are known for great marketing.”

The relationship between specialty dealer and manufacturer must rest on trust, says Brierley. “They like to know they’re protected, that they have our hearts.” That translates into time and attention.

The successful relationship also rests on great products. “[Specialty distributors] need to see [technologies] that are just for them, that we really care about. So we make a big effort to give them products that are significant, with pricing that’s competitive.” IMDA members want and expect value, he continues. The product must be good, and if there’s a problem, the manufacturer must stand behind it. Shipping and fill rates must be excellent, and there’s no place for lots of add-on charges, a practice Brierley refers to as “gouging with a hundred little paper cuts.”

Says Messer, the most important ingredients of a successful manufacturer/specialty distributor relationship are “integrity, honesty and open communication, just like any relationship.” The product must be great, and the manufacturer must provide the distributor 100 percent backup. “We really do want to take care of [specialty distributors],” he says.

Put all these things together and you get increased sales – and more. “They’re mentors,” says Brierley, speaking of many IMDA members. “They give us advice; they speak at our sales meetings.”

Learn more about Maxtec by visiting its website at maxtecinc.com.