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# How manufacturers can use content, mobile tools and more to drive sales

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## GUEST VOICES

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Marketing Manufacturing

For many manufacturers, selling through distributors is a critical pathway to growth as it enables them to reach markets an internal sales team can't address effectively. And to ensure the distributor/manufacture relationship is mutually beneficial in the long-run, manufacturers must provide distributors the sales tools and opportunities to help them grow and profitably build their own business.

But generating sales opportunities and developing successful sales tools is easier said than done as today's industrial buyers complete nearly 60% of their buying journey before contacting the supplier, according to Google. To help manufacturers overcome this challenge, below are three proven, yet often overlooked digital approaches manufacturers should use to help their distributors and themselves grow.

### Drive leads with objective and educational content

The fact that prospects are more than halfway through their buying journey before contacting a supplier gives businesses a unique opportunity to develop content that effectively and consistently differentiates their business and products while helping guide customers through the buying journey.

The first step in this approach is to determine the different "personas" or marketing identities you're selling to and identify their distinct buying objectives and challenges. For example, engineers visiting your website may be looking for information to help them spec a project while safety managers may be more interested in how your product affects their people.

Once you have a clear definition of each target persona, including identifying where they are in the buying cycle and their expected purchase motivations and potential objections, you should create content that appeals to each of them, accelerates them through the sales cycle and has the potential to generate leads for distributors through website landing pages.

One effective way to do this is to create meaningful and useful content (potentially available through both the manufacturer's and distributor's websites). The initial portion of the content can be made available without requiring the user to enter their contact information but should reference supporting powerful tools (e.g., ROI calculator, checklist for implementation, etc.) from the company that can be accessed when the prospect registers with contact information through the distributor.

For example, in an effort to drive leads and further establish themselves as an industry thought leader, an instrumentation manufacturer recently developed an in-depth, easy-to-understand guidebook that interprets complex industry regulations and how they may impact their customers.

### Grow sales with distributor-focused mobile sales tools

For many manufacturers selling via distributors, margins are razor thin – there's no room for losing sales, especially when it can easily be avoided. Leading organizations realize this and rely on mobile sales tools that can help distributor salespeople close more business more efficiently by providing product specifications, quotes and even accepting mobile orders while on-site with the customer.

In addition to driving sales, having an effective mobile sales tool enables distributor salespeople to spend more of their time selling and less time performing data entry. For example, consider the time one salesperson spends adding and updating customer contact details into their smart phone. With a properly designed mobile sales app, accessing a complete and up-to-date address book is a click away.

One more key benefit of a distributor-oriented mobile tool is for the salesperson to be able to quickly look up order and account history before or during a sales call, with no need to contact the back-office to check on where their shipment is.

### Improving your organic ranking with a quality backlink strategy

According to Google, 71% of business-to-business searches begin with a generic search, excluding any mention of brand or company name. Leading manufacturers understand that search engine optimization ("SEO") is critical for helping them drive organic, non-branded visitors to their website.

Over the years, the activities behind what it takes to get you on the first page of Google have changed dramatically. For example, in the early days of SEO, the number of websites pointing their visitors to you was a key variable: the more backlinks to your site, the better. Today, the quality of backlinks is significantly more important than quantity as it helps search engines better identify relationships between websites. If search engines see that a high quality website is pointing their visitors to you, they assume your website is also high quality.

One approach many manufacturers can use to build additional quality backlinks is developing and executing a linking strategy between their supply chain, including OEM, distributors and partners. By mapping out all of the key parts of your supply chain's websites, analyzing which ones have an authoritative website by search engine standards and then facilitating each organization to meaningfully link to each other through effective content, it will help strengthen everyone's website value in search engine's eyes and further improve your organic ranking.

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