

Time for a New Approach to Product Development



the
Last
word

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In the last issue of OFDEALER, consultant Trish Block explained the importance in today's market for A&D firms to learn about some of the interesting and more cost-efficient solutions available from smaller manufacturers and highlighted the role dealers can play in educating their A&D clients on these resources.

How right she was!

Over the past fifteen years, Qdesign has worked with a number of smaller manufacturers to provide new product design and development with support services they think are essential for successfully introducing products.

Given today's challenging market conditions, it simply isn't enough to design new and exciting product, however. Manufacturers need to do much more. They need a clear vision of where the product will fit in the market and be sure they hit the predetermined manufacturer price points.

They also need multi-faceted marketing support in the form of end user-oriented collateral materials and web sites that provide printed and electronic media to meet the needs of designers and dealers.

Manufacturers will find it easier to create a successful product launch when designers and dealers are involved in all aspects of the product and branding.

At NeoCon 2009, there were some excellent examples of just what can happen when this process is implemented effectively.

CCN, a high end case goods manufacturer from Geneva NY, went beyond the traditional design process in the launch of its new "AERO" conference room and support furniture.

CCN worked closely with designers during product development and supported the product rollout with a content-rich web site and flash materials, an ad campaign and a rep introduction training program.

BERCO, a family-owned table manufacturer, introduced "Monorail", its first complete training room environment, including tables, carts and associated products. Their introduction also included web site development, collateral support materials, and marketing assistance.

Lesro, a family-owned seating and waiting room furniture manufacturer, introduced several new products this year and again, support through a robust web site and collateral materials was much in evidence.

In the interests of full disclosure, we should note that each of these companies worked with Qdesign on their new products, but that doesn't make the basic principles any less valid for new product development in general.

Success in today's competitive market requires a comprehensive product plan that not only offers innovative product design and development, but also includes ancillary services such as web design, collateral materials and branding approaches that clearly communicate the product to the A&D community, the dealer and the end user.

It also requires involvement with the manufacturer's channel partners at all stages of the development process. Challenging? Absolutely! But particularly when business is as hard to come by as it is today, we hardly have a choice.