



AV IT YOUR WAY

The UK AV market is worth millions, but different buyers will have different requirements. We tell you how to sell the right products to the right people. And yes boys, size does matter.

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In recent years, audiovisual (AV) applications have become a much more mainstream product in the general market. AV is high on everyone's agenda, with the result that money is being made available for investment, especially in the public and education sectors.

The UK AV market is worth millions, and its recent growth and spread in the world of work is due to the fact that AV can benefit virtually any organization. The size of company is irrelevant, everyone from blue chips, to universities to SMEs, start-ups and consumers is aware of the benefits that AV can

bring in terms of productivity.

However, while everyone seems to understand what AV can do for them, they will have very different requirements, depending on the size of their operation, intended use of product, number of employees and so on. As a salesperson in this market, you need to be aware of any factors that could affect your potential buyers' decision.

SIZE

Small to medium sized enterprises will have fewer people, and less physical space, thus a need for more flexible AV solutions that can

be used in multiple locations by multiple people. It's all about size. SMEs will have a very different set of demands to larger corporations due to their space restrictions. They will generally require more portable audio visual solutions. Smaller companies will need to use these products wherever possible, and they need to be adaptable to the office, for use on the road, or to transport to the home-office or to a client. For instance, lightweight projectors that can be taken on the road for sales presentations but also offer high-quality performance in the boardroom. Portable screens are

ideal, and there is now no longer the need to struggle with the 'traditional tripod'. TCI's Tony Cochrane says, "The latest portable screens simply pull-up from their cassette housing. Because they are slim in profile, they are also much easier to transport between venues."

Brian Wood, sales director at Plus, manufacturers of projectors for Rapesco, says large corporations have a need for both portables and fixed installations. They will have in-house boardrooms and conference rooms that they will need fixed installations for, but they will still have the necessity for equipment that can be used in any type of location. Wood says, "Salespeople will have to tailor their techniques depending on who they're talking to, for example, the CEO of Barclays Bank, as opposed to Mr. Green of the local photo club." Ask your clients what their requirements are, what will they need the equipment for? Then simply match up their needs with one or more of the multitude of available applications.

ADDED INVESTMENT

SMEs will want to consolidate their needs, and they will want to do it on a budget. While it's possible that a small or medium sized business will be in the market to buy more than one product at a time, it is far more likely that a large corporation will have this requirement. In fact, it is conceivable that the buyer you are speaking to is looking to kit out an entire conference room, or set up an auditorium for its company's needs. The emphasis will be on long term investment rather than immediate resolution of a problem. Mark Wilkinson, Nobo multimedia manager, Acco, says, "In my view, having worked in both types of company, large corporations, with

sophisticated purchasing teams, will be more interested in the lifetime cost of a product and how it can add productivity and, hence, shareholder value."

SUPPORT

No matter what kind of equipment you're selling, or to which type of business, one set of criteria remain the same. Users require market-leading products that are reliable, cost effective and supported by the reseller, support that needs to be backed by the distributor. The uses of display technologies such as projectors, plasmas and Smart Boards, are after all, essentially the same in a variety of businesses. These technologies are needed to support employees' specific requirements for displaying, presenting, collating and sharing information. The only difference is, essentially, the size of the audience.

Whereas an SME may be presenting to 10-15 people, large corporations may be presenting to 100-150. The real difference here though might be the screen size. The technology requirement would be fundamentally the same. One-off purchases of mobile projectors and total room solutions can apply equally to SMEs as they can to larger corporations. It's about the application not the organisation.

Fundamentally what buyers want to hear from sales people is how they can get value for money, feature-rich equipment with good support. With all this technology it is important to give the appropriate training and support to encourage the use of the tool in improving everyday working lives. Value added distributors could assist resellers with this. Ultimately, supporting the products in this way will lead to additional demand in larger organisations.

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the reliability of the technology and any features which mean it is easy to set up, use and maintain."

STATUS

The status of the reseller can also be a factor when selling to different sized companies. Larger corporations may have different demands and require larger quantities of products. Resellers need to ask themselves if they have the resources to support the demands of a large corporation. It's not always about the buyer, sometimes it's about the seller.

The difference lies in the number of installations that may be needed, for example an SME may just need one multi-media boardroom or meeting room set up, where as international and multi-national businesses will need this repeated across multiple sites and locations, often in different countries.

Steve Dracup, MD of Promethean AV Distribution, says, "Salespeople should aim to develop an advocate of the product use within a large organisation. A person in a position to influence sales from within an organisation can be a powerful ally." Resellers must aim to get the product in front of the customer. Buyers want to hear about the positive impact the product will have on the business and, as Dracup says, "The best way to do this is to demonstrate."

However, remember that the worst business move you can make is to commit to a deal that you can't fulfill. If you don't have the particular skill set needed in-house, have you considered partnering with a distributor or supplier that can offer that additional knowledge? They can provide the specialist installers and service backup. ■

EASE OF USE

Another requirement is ease of use. Simeon Joseph, product marketing manager for projectors and plasmas at NEC, says, "Dealers need to be aware that both SMEs and larger enterprises need their AV investments to be future-proof. No company wants to have to upgrade six months down the line. In addition, when selling to both these markets, it is important to emphasise