



ARE YOU

Yes, your new 2005 catalogue
and it's time to get out to y

A good catalogue is one that contains not only the essential, everyday top selling lines but also a good smattering of lively, innovative and new products to spark interest and differentiate you from your competitors. A good catalogue will also contain categories such as catering and janitorial and new technology products such as interactive whiteboards and projectors for presentation and up-to-date consumables products in this very fast moving sector. And if you've got a good catalogue then you ought to be using it to its full potential.

U READY?

ues are now available...
your customers and sell, sell, sell.

Manufacturers have worked hard and invested large sums of money to develop products that will satisfy customers' needs and deliver value for money to the user and a decent margin to you. They also take a lot of time to research the market to find out what consumers want, employ experts to design and innovate as well as experts to find the most cost effective materials and production facilities and methods to bring the product to market at the right price. And those same products have had to 'get past' your product managers and merchandising teams before they make it into your catalogues.

SO, IT'S OVER TO YOU! ARE YOU READY? ARE YOU PREPARED?

As a close friend and colleague often says 'Be prepared or prepare to fail'.

It's now time for you to make the most of the opportunity. Many of you will already be doing a lot of what we are about to say, but it is never a bad thing to revisit and refocus on the basics. You never know, there may just be that something in this article that will get you that extra order this month. >>

TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL CATALOGUE LAUNCH

1. Familiarise yourself with your new catalogue. What has changed? Is the layout and running order different? What has come out and what new products have gone in?

2. Look through the new products and choose half a dozen that appeal to you. These can be used as conversation openers when you go into your customers to present and/or follow up the catalogue.

3. You know your customers best. Plan your calls and make sure you have something interesting and relevant to them to talk about in the appointment. Look for products that will interest them. If appropriate mark up relevant pages to review together. (See our article on Account Reviews.)

4. Check to see whether there are any manufacturers' promotions running alongside the catalogue launch period. What's on offer and which customers will be relevant to such promotions. Or can you offer any free samples? It doesn't have to be much but it will be much remembered.

5. Is your company running a launch offer? For example, you could offer a new product at a special price for any orders you take over £100 for the first week. Another idea could be to run your own competition. For example identify x number of new products. Anyone finding over x number will receive a bar of chocolate. This will encourage customers to browse the catalogue and hopefully see something they will want to buy

6. Make your customer's life as easy as possible. Make sure you get a copy of

your catalogue to everyone in the organisation that needs one. Encourage your contact to let you provide more copies. Explain that this will help ensure that there is no leakage and that people in their organisation will 'comply' and go through them if they make it easy. If your customer doesn't already have a pre-printed order form then offer to put one together. This also provides an opportunity to review product mix and margins.

7. Open Days/Launch Days. In large customer organisations it could well help your contact to implement the catalogue and any changes through the organisation by holding an open/launch day or days. This can be done formally by holding specific sessions in a meeting room or, informally by having a small stand in the reception area or canteen/rest area at lunchtime. Again, make things more interesting by holding a prize draw or competition.

8. To make sure that your customer uses the new catalogue straight away, why not offer to take away their old one for recycling?

9. Goes without saying – always carry a stock of catalogues in the boot. You never know when an opportunity is going to present itself and let's face it, there'll be no sales coming from catalogues sitting in warehouses and private garages.

10. Finally, it's not just a case of distributing the catalogue within your existing customers. What is your strategy for new business? Think about how your new 2005 catalogue can be used to go after new business.

A WORD ON SWITCH-SELLING

We all know that some customers just expect more and more for less and less. There will be some, and you know who they are, who will be ready to pressure you for a cost saving the minute you walk through the door. Be prepared. Look carefully at the products they are currently buying from you and the price that they are paying. In a lot of situations there should be no need to reduce the price. Find an alternative product that will do the job just as well but that costs you less. This could mean switching from one brand to another or from a well known brand name to your own brand. Talk to your purchasing team if you're not sure. They will know where the best terms are coming from with their suppliers. Watch out for the cash margin though. It does not always follow that a bigger percentage margin equals more cash.

Feeling inspired? We certainly hope so and wish you every success in your catalogue launch campaign this year. ■