

Laboratory Focus



Empowering technical buyers to make successful decisions

Andrew Jones, Axair Fans Ltd

I've previously discussed the impact of complacency and frustration in technical industries and how looking at things differently can aid competitive advantage and open the door to new opportunities. Customers deserve more than they get from industry giants, regardless of spend or size, interactions should be frictionless and foster a collaborative work environment.

Business leadership teams constantly talk about how they can improve their processes and systems, but how many spare a thought for those customers in roles where they are buying solutions for organisations. Believe me, as the technical head of an engineering company I speak to a lot of customers who are buyers of industrial fans and the positive feedback following the first interaction is often overwhelming. The thing is they have a long, arduous, and heavy process that sales teams really don't appreciate or take on board when interacting with them. From self-educating and intense research to ultimately becoming subject matter experts in many niche components or applications. Then, only after they've conducted extensive self-serve research do they think they can clearly and confidently express what they need from suppliers. They want to speed this process up of course, but admittedly, none of us like to speak to a salesperson who doesn't add value or understand our specific requirements, it's a painful experience, especially when we feel we know more about the component than the very people who are meant to be the experts. The one biggest issue for these buyers isn't finding suppliers, it's having trust in the information available, the people giving that information and mitigating the risk associated with the solutions or suppliers offering them. Today's buyer journey, made more difficult by the vast amount of information online, has reached a point where it's now difficult to navigate in the right direction without a significant amount of help.

Our buyers don't want more information that would distract from the key task of sourcing and procuring, they want the right, relevant information to help them to pinpoint the right solution. Reports show that 84% of technical buyers prefer purchasing from a company that understands their goals, they clearly want to be understood. I've spoken about the benefits of collaborative working in previous articles, but this statistic really resonates with me. Our company, Axair Fans, has a set of values that every employee embodies in their everyday activities. A key value we live by is that

"We Understand, Apply and Give Back". This means that we focus on understanding our customers' needs before offering a solution. Our team are taught and reminded regularly that listening starts and ends with respect. It means we'll actually hear and digest our customers points as they make them and wait for them to finish before offering our take. In an old, antiquated industry such as ours there are lots of old school salespeople, they're keen to speak, talk about product features or ask the next question, and they forget to listen to what their customers are saying. This creates a huge gap in communication in a stage that is highly significant to the buyer who wants to ask questions about specifications, implementations, and the expected challenges if they transitioned to our solution.

You have to be genuinely interested in your clients' challenges to operate in this way, because ultimately customers don't buy products, they buy the results that the product gives. To appreciate this, you have to show empathy for the customers plight and build authentic and trusted relationships that take away any perceived risk of changing supplier or product. In my experience giving the buyer the control in the selection process ensures they can focus on their goals rather than being swayed down a road that is more biased towards the suppliers' own objectives around product targets and revenue goals. This doesn't only help the buyer to navigate to the right decision using their own goals as the compass, it benefits the supplier too. Our employees who understand, apply and give back learn more about the industry we operate in and stay up to date with the latest trends. Ultimately our customers ensure we have one foot in the real world and don't make assumptions about buyer or customer behaviour. In an economy where one of the most popular measures businesses are taking to remain solvent, is improving efficiency, reducing friction in the purchasing journey, and speeding up selection times makes a significant contribution.

More information online: www.axair-fans.co.uk



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