

The Value of Education

Manufacturer's training program helps dealers develop skills

By Pat Ford

A water treatment equipment manufacturer's best assets are its dealers. They choose to do business with the manufacturer, so it should be committed to earning their trust on a daily basis. As a result of their continued partnership and hard work, their experience working with the manufacturer should be rewarding and meaningful. Therefore, it is the manufacturer's responsibility to provide the tools they need to run successful businesses in their markets.

One of the key tools in that toolbox is ongoing education. Providing professional development and continuing education opportunities creates a lasting, long-term relationship with an independent dealer base.

Annual Training

While offering professional development training is not necessarily new for Hellenbrand Inc., it is a component the company takes seriously. It began its annual dealer training more than 15 years ago as a way to promote ongoing education in the industry and to show dealers it cares about their professional and business growth. One of the keys to having a successful business is to be a smart and reliable resource for customers. Hellenbrand not only aims to advance its dealers' knowledge and expertise, but also ensure that information is relayed in a way that is customized for each customer.

Held over two and a half days, the training takes a two-pronged approach: Build camaraderie among dealers and

provide a variety of training opportunities. The company invites dealers from across the U.S., resulting in representation from myriad markets and geographies. They get to meet their fellow dealers, learn about the water issues they may not encounter in their own regions and identify the opportunities for personal and business growth that will best serve them.

For a well-rounded approach, the seminar includes both large-group presentations and smaller breakout sessions,

Hellenbrand holds a training event for its dealers every fall.



covering topics such as technical training and communications strategies.

Providing the technical support dealers need, such as how to program new equipment or troubleshoot common problems, is an absolute must. It is key for dealers to be well trained on the equipment so they can enter the field without hesitation. This is one of the areas where the seminar transitions from a large-group, PowerPoint-focused setting into small groups for hands-on direction and practice. This helps engage all learning styles and offers the ability to enhance the necessary technical skills for dealers in residential and commercial settings.

Conversely, Hellenbrand wants to marry dealers' technical expertise with sales and marketing prowess to create a formula for success. The combination of those two assets can take dealers to the next level, so sales and marketing are the other topics covered at the annual training. This component includes insights and training on some of the finer points of

the water treatment industry, such as helping dealers develop marketing and communications plans, offering tips and strategies on how to run a successful business, and assessing key performance indicators and how to use those data for future success.

Discussion of these topics takes place in both large- and small-group sessions. The smaller sessions have a workshop-style format where the dealers present ideas, offer feedback and assess best practices for conducting and maintaining business. It is here that the cumulative knowledge of employees can help contribute to the success of their peers.

Overall, Hellenbrand does not want its annual training to be keynote speakers simply lecturing people. Their business acumen and words of wisdom are helpful, but the real goal is to generate a dialogue, foster collaboration and teamwork, and work collectively toward a business goal. No one person has all the answers, so in order to be successful,

everyone needs to learn from one another. That is why such an emphasis is placed on incorporating several smaller working sessions into the seminar.

Regional Training

In addition to the large annual training, Hellenbrand coordinates and implements regional training events throughout the year. These can be a supplement to the large training session in the fall or an opportunity for dealers who were unable to make it to the fall event to receive the training they need to improve their business. Regional training sessions include approximately 10 dealers and offer a more personalized training opportunity. The sessions are crafted around the region's top market issues, educating and training to those specifically. A more tailored approach allows focus on specific elements that would not necessarily apply to everyone during the fall training and the ability to provide feedback that is applicable to



Clack | Proline | LCRO | John Guest | Filmtec

Pentair | Omnipure | CGS | HydroSpring | Viqua

WATER
WORLD USA

Quality • Service • Pricing
servicing dealers nationwide
waterworldusa.com • 877-781-8777

Made in USA commercial RO systems from 200 GPD to 9,000 GPD
Customizable Residential RO Systems 50-100 GPD to meet your exact needs.

Write in 756

dealers for their immediate business needs.

One of the best feelings is seeing the renewed sense of confidence and excitement the dealers have at the conclusion of the trainings. There is a distinct

difference in the dealers when they walk in the door and when they leave. They receive the technical training they need, but also are walking away with tips and ideas on how to improve their businesses—as well as with new friends and colleagues for ongoing support.

These training sessions help dealers see the value of ongoing education and business development. By attending the training sessions, dealers show they are committed to making tangible investments in their businesses. The dealers understand that they do not know it all and are ready to gain additional knowledge and skills. Because of this

One of the best feelings is seeing the renewed sense of confidence and excitement the dealers have at the conclusion of the trainings.

extra effort, they become a truly valuable asset to their customers by answering key questions and helping them make the best decisions for their homes and families.

At the end of the sessions, Hellenbrand hopes that the dealers have found two or three key takeaways they can implement and measure throughout the year. Their continuous improvement efforts, no matter how big or small, can yield positive results. Specifically, the company uses key performance indicators to assess dealers' successes, analyzing factors such as closing rates, billable hours, call-back percentages and burdened labor rates for residential and

commercial technicians. Additionally, the sessions foster employee empowerment, so dealers are able to take ownership of process improvements within their businesses. This can include sales training, staff

education and consumer education through informative websites and, of course, knowledgeable personnel. Combined, these metrics show dealers the importance of understanding and implementing best practices, which essentially stem from receiving ongoing education.

Ultimately, identifying business-changing opportunities is a challenge throughout the year, and that is what the company strives to provide its dealers—because it is what they deserve. **WQP**

Pat Ford is general manager for Hellenbrand. Ford can be reached at pford@hellenbrand.com.

FREE EDUCATION FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OFFICE

June 29 FREE Webinar | 2 P.M. EDT

Buy-in Strategies for Employees

Join your host, WQP, for the second in a series of three **free** webinars dedicated to providing sales training and expanded business skills to POU/POE water treatment dealers and contractors.

Make it a Lunch and Learn

Invite your employees to view this 45-minute webinar on how to empower employees to create memorable customer service experiences through procedures that are trainable, repeatable, and trackable across all departments.

REGISTER NOW at www.wqpmag.com/junewebinar

The FREE 3-part Webinar Series Continues in 2016:

Sept. 28

Increasing profits through cost-effectiveness

About the Webinar Presenter



Michael Thompson
President, Applied
Management Group Inc.

A 26-year veteran within the water treatment industry, Thompson has helped hundreds of owners, managers, salespeople, service techs and support personnel achieve revenue plans of more than \$29 million per year.