

See the back cover and you'll find what we have to HELP YOUR MARGINS

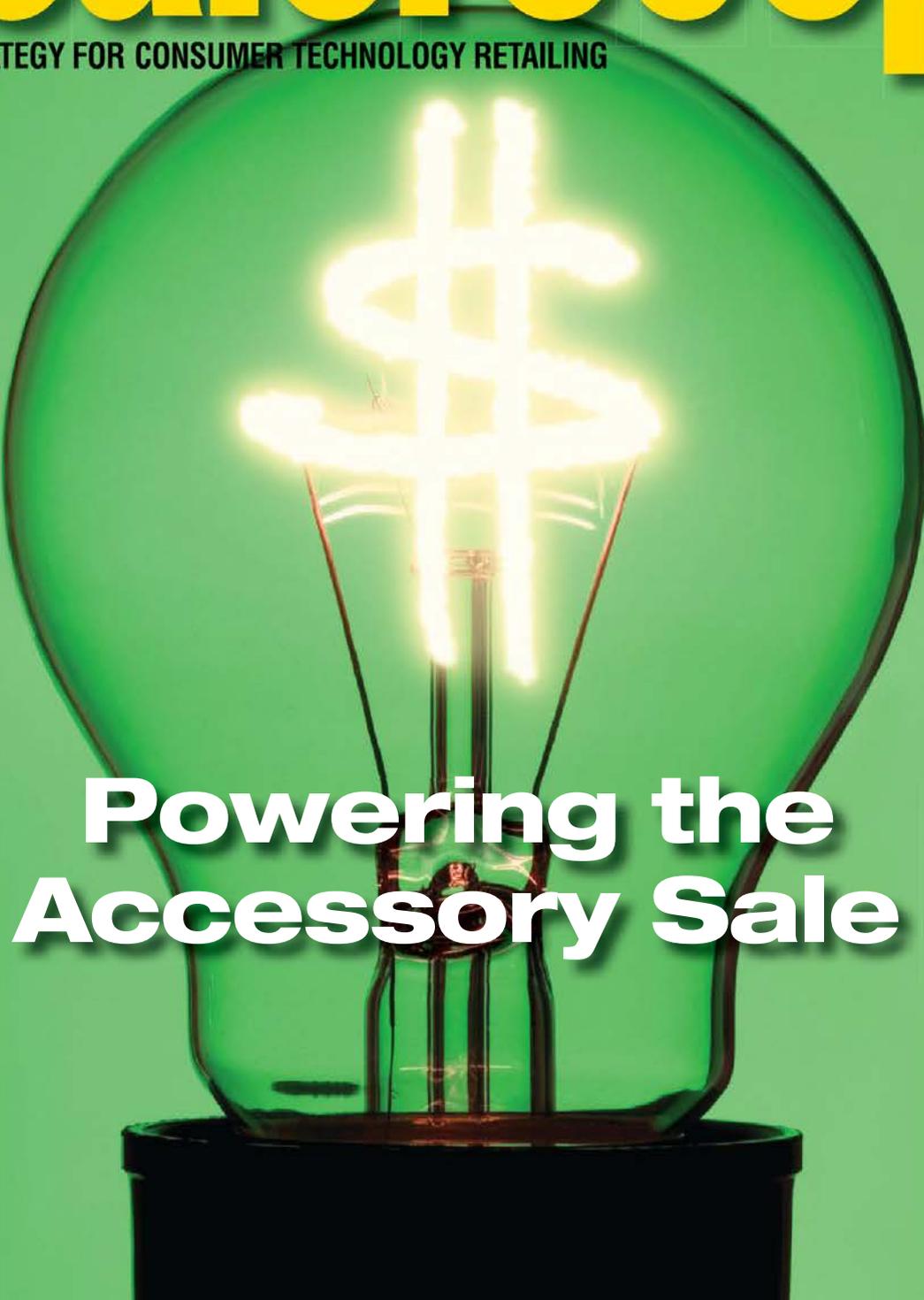
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# Dealerscope

PRODUCT & STRATEGY FOR CONSUMER TECHNOLOGY RETAILING



## Powering the Accessory Sale

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BY LEO DARDASHTI

## Give Your Customers a Voice

Providing the products your customers want

Remember the early versions of tablet computers and smart-phones? They were just niche products until they were updated with the right mix of customer-requested features. According to comScore, two-thirds of Americans 13-and-older now have a smartphone or tablet.

Unfortunately, not all good products are as successful out of the gate as they might be, simply because they haven't yet delivered on customer needs, preferences or price points. Suppliers who launch new products without consumer insights—or who are not receptive to consumer feedback—often lose out on potential sales. As a dealer, you can build successful relationships with your suppliers by being the conduit of the consumer's voice, ultimately creating a winning go-to-market experience.

### UPWARD COMMUNICATION

In today's marketplace, you should do more than just take the product as offered and place it in the hands of your customers. To be more successful, consider telling the supplier what product features and attributes your customers want. Look at consumer comments in online reviews to discover the specific features and options they want. Gather feedback and talk to the supplier before you tell the customer their desired option is not available. You know your customers' product language and culture. Help the supplier speak that language and match that culture. *Give your customers a voice.*

As a dealer, you know your product segment niche. It may be high-end, low-end or mid-market. Your market segment might depend upon customer expectations in your region of the country, such as color, materials or lifestyle. Or maybe you cater primarily to Millennials or Baby Boomers.

By explaining your customers' specific requirements to your suppliers, you will help suppliers migrate toward providing the product you need. Ask for changes that many of your customers

prefer, create a common denominator of requested features, and work with dealers in other territories to aggregate orders for these improvements. Aggregation increases the likelihood that the supplier will make the changes.

When it comes to improving product installations, you gain valuable insight into how the hardware could be changed to be more efficient, cost less or handle unique installations. *Give your suppliers specifics.*

### DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION

A good supplier should provide you with an easy-to-sell, quality product on time, in the right package and for the

your suppliers with the goal of gaining a better understanding of the what, why and how of the products you are selling.

Take time to participate in supplier webinar events that provide product or promotional updates. Sharing experiences with other dealers helps you and your suppliers better gauge the market. You can also support your suppliers by participating in its tradeshow by working the booth and, in turn, getting new leads.

Your supplier will provide a product that solves a problem or meets a need, but you can help make a good product better. Successful consumer product providers constantly seek, review and

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right price. Suppliers normally provide product literature, training and support, but you can work with them to go further by providing leads, extra help, product promotion, graphics for your website, frequent communication and customized sales materials.

Encourage your suppliers to communicate their product roadmaps, so you can prepare a strategy to sell new products when they are available. With added visibility, you will be better positioned to right-size your inventory. *Listen to your suppliers.*

When suppliers share planned product material or feature price changes, have a dialog with them and share how you expect your customers to react. If they hear common responses from other dealers, they may adjust these changes. Cultivate direct communication with

incorporate product changes. You have a unique opportunity to collaborate in making these changes—and benefit from increased sales, customer loyalty and more referrals.

As a savvy dealer, you should expect responsive support from your suppliers in exchange for your experience and investment to improve their product. Provide upward communication and solicit the downward communication. As a result of this collaboration, you both will make more money. ■

*Leo Dardashti is president and CEO of Atlantic Inc., a supplier of Snowsound technology acoustic panels, entertainment furniture and accessories, storage products and home organization products. He is also a member of CEA's Accessories Division Board.*