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Improving Private Label Sales

By Cynthia Kincaid

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In today's competitive jan/san marketplace, having every edge possible can significantly impact the bottom line. Private label products can give jan/san distributors the boost they need to move the revenue needle. Many products can be sold under a house brand, and with a quality product and a proper marketing strategy, distributors can expect to improve their private label sales.

"Traditionally, private label seems to have been positioned as something that doesn't have the

packaging or a national marketing campaign behind it," says Keith Schneringer, marketing manager for San Diego-based [WAXIE Sanitary Supply](#).

But Schneringer concedes that perceptions are changing.

"We are now seeing private label products that are every bit as good as their national brands, depending on the product," he says. "These products have better packaging and marketing, which helps with the perception, while also meeting a price point for budget-conscious customers."



At its essence, improving private label sales is really about two things: quality and marketing. Distributors must offer quality products and market them well.

Distributors should market and sell private label products just like they do their other products, but distributors may want to think about extending the private label brand to less common products, as well.

“Once you’ve established a private label brand, you can take that name to products well beyond what you think you can do,” says Jack Schmid, founder of Mission, Kansas-based [J. Schmid & Assoc., Inc.](#), specialists in direct and multi-channel marketing. “But if you’re fighting a strong brand already established in the industry, it’s going to be a tougher road.”

Private label selling is no different from selling a brand name product, it just takes more thought and effort, says Schmid, especially when distributors are selling something that’s a commodity.

“The more a product is a commodity, the harder you’ve got to work to establish some kind of uniqueness in brand equity,” he says.

Schmid highlights the new book “Guaranteed to Last: L.L. Bean’s Century of Outfitting America” by Jim Gorman as a must-read for retailers and sellers of brand or private label products.

“L.L. Bean was one of the first direct marketing companies to really understand branding,” says Schmid. “They talked about product having ‘Beaness.’ No one could claim they were Bean, and every product had the Bean label.”

It’s that level of selling exactness that can make a company and its products successful, and jan/san distributors would do well to read the book, and other books on branding, to elevate their private label line to those levels of uniqueness.

Most companies that launch and maintain a private label line of products find that they can enhance their company’s image while significantly adding to revenue.

“We would never go to market without our house brand, and in many instances, we lead with our house brand,” says Cronyn.

If done right, private label distribution can make a real difference to a company’s success, says Schmid.

“When you look at how you can grow and build the bottom line, private labeling has enormous potential,” he says. “I encourage companies to do this.”

*Cynthia Kincaid is a freelance writer based in Columbus, Ohio.
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