

▶ FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE

JENNIFER MURPHY, PRESIDENT, NETPLUS ALLIANCE

"Times and conditions change so rapidly that we must keep our aim constantly focused on the future." Walt Disney said that in 1950, and it's something that NetPlus Alliance has taken to heart.

Many distributors have a deep history; their businesses are built on generations of leadership. To compete, distributors must balance that legacy with the digital practices of today. At NetPlus, a family business, we have embraced that ideal.

We are a buying group focused on the future, as we support our distributor members in translating their product knowledge, strong customer relationships and pride in the industry for today's buyers. These values must be coupled with digital practices – e-commerce, digital marketing, CRM and more – that can position independent distributors to compete against nontraditional competitors like Amazon.



NetPlus is investing in digital services that will support our distributor members' journey. We're strengthening our educational and training offerings for members as they build the next generation of their teams. We are also continuing to expand our product offering to provide access to a diverse group of industrial MRO and contractor supplies manufacturers and wholesalers.

We're moving toward change to help our members and supplier partners survive and thrive. We want to give them the edge they need to take their businesses to the next level, holding onto the values that make them special while looking forward into 2018 and beyond.

Jennifer Murphy is the president of NetPlus Alliance. Learn more about NetPlus Alliance at netplusalliance.com, jennifer.murphy@netplusalliance.com or call (716) 438-2014.



MURPHY

▶ DAVID VS. GOLIATH

ZACHARY T. HAINES, CEO, DPA BUYING GROUP

Can independent distributors compete against Amazon? This was the question swirling around two national trade shows in which DPA recently exhibited. The answer is yes, but how? Here are some ways:

- 1) Drive out costs by improving the speed and efficiency of warehouse and supply operations.
- 2) Invest in e-commerce, mobile apps and rich product content.
- 3) Train your sales force to understand, articulate and quantify your value to the customer.
- 4) Join a group purchasing organization like the DPA Buying Group.

For the purpose of this article, I will touch on the last two items. Distributors must be able to understand and articulate their value over their large

B2C competitors. Leverage your experience, product knowledge, company history and customer service. Truly understand your customer's "pain points" by asking the right questions and listening.

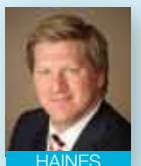
Provide solutions to their problems and build the trust and confidence that an online retailer cannot. Consider offering a guarantee. Your customer needs to know how much your product or service will help them achieve their goals, and is therefore worth more. Assure them that you will be by their side if they need your help or expertise.

The DPA Buying Group is comprised of over 700 distributors in the industrial/contractor supplies, safety, packaging and janitorial product segments. Groups like DPA leverage the collective purchasing power of their members to negotiate better



pricing, marketing allowances, lower minimums and extra promotions. DPA's vendors (more than 220) also include wholesalers like R3 Safety and ORS Nasco. Buying groups are a great way to save money. Although it depends on which group you join, DPA does not interfere with your ordering, invoicing or warehousing, and there are no dues or sign-up fees. If you are an independent distributor, joining a buying group is a no-brainer.

Zachary T. Haines is CEO of DPA Buying Group. Contact him at www.DPAIndustrial.com or DPA@DPABuyingGroup.com.



HAINES

THE MEANING OF CHANNEL PARTNERSHIP

LARRY DAVIS, CHAIRMAN AND CEO, AGONOW

When we founded master wholesaler and channel solutions provider AgoNow, we embraced the tagline, “industrial-strength partnership.”

To be a true partner – a word that I’ll admit is sometimes thrown around without much support – we believe you need commitment and capacity: You must do the things you say you’re going to do, and you must have the capacity to do it. If you can’t do your job effectively, and as a result, negatively affect somebody else’s business, that’s not a partnership.

Both suppliers and distributors must be agile, have open minds and trust those that are trying to help. Regardless of the role you play in this industrial market, the fear of allowing someone inside your business must end.

After all, people still want to buy from people. They need those partners to help them grow, syndicate

content, measure carrying cost, identify new market opportunities and more. That requires trust. Do you trust that your channel partners are truly trying to help you advance your business to become more profitable and sustainable?

At AgoNow, we have taken steps to demonstrate our commitment to building a partnership with suppliers and distributors: We’re pure, and we’ll sign a contract with distributors to prove we won’t compete with them. We are 100 percent owned by our leadership team, so that we can be in a position to make decisions that are right in a broader context rather than a company just trying to make its next quarter.

We believe that the end-user is best served when everyone in the supply chain works well together, and we want to help facilitate those relationships.



DAVIS

WILLINGNESS TO SERVE IS INSPIRING

JACK TEMPLIN, PRESIDENT, AD INDUSTRIAL DIVISION

The willingness of AD members to serve is instrumental to our divisions.

As a member-governed organization, AD relies heavily on its members to provide direction and leadership for its divisions. Certainly our staff is important, but whether it is on boards, product committees or various ad hoc committees, members provide a critical role in leading the organization.

At our most recent AD Industrial Division North American Meeting, I was reminded once again of the important role that these volunteers play and am amazed at the selfless sacrifices that are made by people who have significant responsibilities in their own companies. These people give tirelessly of their time and talents in support of a cause. Often, these same people are serving in other ways. They sit on

supplier advisory councils and participate in industry associations, while in their spare time, serve on hospital boards, bank boards and the like.

Why, when others feel too busy or overwhelmed by their circumstances, do these kind of people seem to have the time and energy to serve others?

I have asked a few of them and it is interesting to hear their perspective. While many might view serving on boards and committees outside their primary job as an obligation or even burdensome, these “serial servants” view the opportunity to serve as a privilege and feel fortunate to be asked to contribute. It is their way of giving back to an industry or community that has been good to them. Without exception, when asked, they will often say that the rewards of service far

exceed the extra effort required.

We all saw the same kind of selfless service with the most recent natural disasters that struck our country. Whether it was hurricane Harvey, Irma, Maria or another need, there are countless stories of people setting their personal interests aside to serve others, often taking personal risk to do so. Interestingly, when interviewed, these volunteers often say that the satisfaction they received from being of service made it all worthwhile.

These people inspire me.

So, to all the volunteers out there serving our organizations, our industry and our communities, please accept this heartfelt thank you!



TEMPLIN

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