

FEATURED MEMBER



[Click Here](#)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The Chamber is bustling with upcoming events. Please view our calendar for the programs that interest you most. Join in! [Click here](#) to see updated calendar.

SUBSCRIBE

To subscribe enter your email address below then click submit:

FORWARD TO A FRIEND

To forward a copy, enter your colleague's email address below then click send:

ARCHIVES

Recent newsletters

[June 2007](#)
[May 2007](#)
[April 2007](#)

[More...](#)

Business Savvy features articles about vital business issues explored by regional professionals.

Become Your Own First B2B Customer

Submitted By: Craig Marowitz, Vice President of Sales, Expert Technology Associates

How Do You Prove That the Products and Solutions You Advocate Will Perform In The Real World? Make Them Part of Your Own Office Infrastructure.

In a sales-based world, there's phenomenal pressure to make numbers. Manufacturers love to push SKUs and fill quotas, and anyone selling their brand is expected to toe the line. However, if your business also supports those solutions, then you're responsible for the continued outcome of the sale. You're not just selling merchandise, you're selling a happy home for your products and services. They have to perform, long-term, to establish positive relationships and generate referrals and repeat business.

How do you guarantee that a complex product or solution actually performs, especially if your merchandise derives from a combination of third-party vendors? It seems many sales teams are willing to stand on manufacturer claims alone. Clients are led to believe your offering will work for them because the box says so.

Yet, as all of us have learned from as early on as our first Hot Wheels set (the one where the cars just didn't rip across the tracks like in the commercials): Not everything works like the box says it does.

B2B companies need to make more of an investment in their products than just stocking inventory. Here's a committed approach: Be your own proving ground. At ETA, we implement business communication technologies: everything from VoIP phone systems, to automatic call distribution, to carrier services, to remote connectivity. We work with dozens of vendors, chosen from a field of hundreds, all making plenty of claims.

We decided that the only way to guarantee that the products we were offering *worked* was to implement them in our own office. We're a small business similar to those we serve, with an accounting department, a sales department, storage needs, messaging requirements, remote workers, training, etc. In the end, the best way to evaluate vendors, to make sure that equipment delivered on *all* its promises with an efficiency that we'd be proud to advocate (no "gotchas"), to get our people familiar with the systems from soup-to-nuts, was to incorporate these solutions into our infrastructure. All the telecom systems, messaging, video and web conferencing capabilities and networking we use throughout our offices are the same solutions we provide to our customers. We call it the "Model Home."

This solves several challenges. 1) We know from experience how reliable the products are. 2) Our technicians and help desk staff actually use the systems, so they know how to address questions. And 3), when a potential client asks, "Can you show me an office where this is in use?" we know right where to point them, without imposing on an existing customer.

It's a simple case of putting one's money where one's mouth is, and it's fairly well ignored in the sales world. Most organizations don't bother to use the products they sell, although many could probably find ways to apply their goods and services to their own office environments and procedures. It's easier to make numbers than to make happy customers, but only one leads to long-term, mutual success.

About Expert Technology Associates

Expert Technology Associates (ETA) drives positive results for businesses through its guidance, implementation, project management and ongoing support of critical business communication applications and systems. The company designs solutions that generate higher profits, lower costs and increased productivity for its clients. ETA's offerings encompass VoIP, IP PBX and related solutions; plus carrier services, data networking, managed network services, call center technologies, unified communications and collaboration. Learn more at www.expertta.com.