

Differentiating Factors

The following list is intended to help stimulate thinking and brainstorming in order to identify some of the less obvious factors that can be used to differentiate your company, product/service and self from the competition. Ask how you are different than the competition in each of these areas. For each area where you are different, ask what it costs the customer not to have your method of doing things.

COMPANY

organizational infrastructure, future plans, emphasis, i.e., quality, team, planning, financial stability, communications, corporate integrity, inter-departmental knowledge, reputation, experience in industry, track records, i.e., safety, environmental.

PERSONNEL

training, commitment, capabilities, special skills/departments, experience in the industry, quality of professional, turn over that impacts relationships.

FACILITIES

location, number, redundancies/backup, modernization, capabilities, accessibility, flexibility.

MATERIALS

feedstock quality, source/availability, procurement processes, uniform product.

MANUFACTURING

product line - breadth/depth, product superiority, reliability engineering, lead time requirements, special or proprietary manufacturing processes, product consistency, quality assurance/controls, safety and environmental record, custom capabilities, flexibility, real time order status monitoring, outsourcing, short notice changes, special size orders capabilities.

DISTRIBUTION

distribution system, packaging, shipping/transporting, tracking/monitoring, inventory - special arrangements, disposal/EPA standards.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

capabilities, focus, i.e., customer, market, product, number of test runs to ensure consistency, R&D technical support.

CUSTOMER SUPPORT SERVICES

order center, on call 24 hours a day, customer service follow up calls, marketing research for customer support, training, knowledgeable staff, technical support services, quick resolution of problems, documentation, warranties, guarantees, simplified paperwork, easy ordering process, customer interaction analysis.

SALES

customers to rep ratio, customer relationships, team approach, knowledge of customer's business, corporate account manager, "partnering" relationships, national account manager, diagnostic and/or value based approach to selling, specialists, technical competence, responsive to customer needs