



Thornhvac
HVAC Recruiters

Thornhvac Ventilation Sector Survey 2013

Overview

Thornhvac's 2013 survey into the state of the current ventilation market asked the opinions of those working in sales roles within the ventilation sector to determine how recession in the construction industry and other factors including legislation and energy efficiency policies have impacted on the sale of British products. It also set out to understand the greatest threats to sector growth and market priorities and trends.

Executive summary

UK sales managers in the ventilation sector believe good service and product knowledge are helping them win the battle over cheap imports and tight budgets.

The study shows that price is a key influencing factor in 87 per cent of sales with product efficiency being important in less than a third of deals.

Sales professionals working for UK manufacturers reveal they are winning business by offering greater product knowledge and better service than competitors selling imported products.

Although demand for energy efficient products is high in the new build sector many of those questioned say more needs to be done to raise awareness within the building services sector of the long term benefits of product innovation.

Responses indicate that there is a lack of understanding of the importance of good ventilation and the costs involved in installing high quality, energy efficient products.

The survey highlights the need for greater regulation to ensure good ventilation is a requirement rather than an option.

The report also highlights a need for sales people in the ventilation sector to understand their products and how they operate with 81 per cent believing technical understanding is an essential quality for anyone selling ventilation.

Sales people are an essential link between the manufacturer and the market and this survey demonstrates that a sales person who can communicate the value of innovation in the latest products can have a significant influence on market perceptions.

What's needed now is more effective legislation to ensure best practice across the board. Initiatives such as BPEC don't seem to be going far enough in ensuring our buildings are fitted with efficient, high quality ventilation.

Results

1. What matters most to your customers when buying ventilation products?

87% of respondents said price was the most important factor for their customers.

29% felt efficiency was either equally important or more important.

It was felt that contractors were most likely to be influenced by price. Many of those questioned felt service and support both before and after a sale were also important factors and could make the difference between a sale proceeding or not.

Sales people felt those purchasing their products valued a problem solving approach that gave them the best solution for their particular project.

Delivery schedules, brand quality and reputation, specialist product knowledge and responsive service were highlighted as other factors valued by customers. There was a general feeling amongst those surveyed that specifiers increasingly rely on manufacturers for specialist advice and services, creating a greater need for sales people with technical expertise and industry knowledge.

2. How important is brand reputation when you are selling ventilation products?

30% of those questioned believed brand reputation was extremely important, 60% believed it was only important for certain customers and 10% felt other factors were more important.

3. What do you think manufacturers could do to improve their success in the market?

Product innovation was felt to be the most important factor for improving sales in the current market. The second most important factor was felt to be better training for employees. Marketing and strong customer relationships were also felt to be important. Some of those questioned believed innovation could go too far with some products on the market being over engineered in the pursuit of efficiency. Independent distributors called for more support from manufacturers in terms of training, marketing and information.

4. What qualities are most important in a ventilation sales person?

Product knowledge was felt to be the most important quality followed closely by technical understanding. Service was third most important and fourth was communication. All four qualities were selected by more than three quarters of respondents. Other qualities listed included honesty, confidence in products, the ability to understand a problem and provide a convincing solution and in-depth knowledge of the construction process.

5. What are the biggest challenges you face in your Ventilation Sales role?

This was an open question that generated some interesting responses and gave a strong indication of some of the key issues influencing the sales of British manufactured ventilation products.

From the responses given it is clear that the current ventilation market is highly competitive and the qualities identified above are more important than ever when helping British firms compete against cheap imports.

Some of those surveyed indicated that competition was so fierce that it was generating a price war with the result that prices were being driven down and margins squeezed.

Strong relationships and service were felt to be helping some companies overcome price sensitivity.

There was felt to be a common misconception that low up front cost was the most important differentiator with a lack of understanding about the follow on costs that could drive up the overall budget.

Several of those questioned called for greater regulation in the ventilation sector. BPEC courses, legislation and building regulations did not go far enough, some felt, leaving the industry wide open to products and systems that were of low quality and offered poor performance.

It was felt that engineers should be better educated in the concepts of energy efficiency and how these savings could offset the initial capital investment.

Reaching the key decision maker, particularly in local authorities and housing associations, remains a challenge and overall in the construction sector there appears to be a lack of awareness of the standards that need to be met to satisfy legislation and building regulations.

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