

a MANA resource for principals and reps

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DECEMBER 2019
\$12.97

Bob Gallagher, Teeling & Gallagher

“MANA has always been a companion and partner.”

Considering
the Challenges
of Managing a
Rep Firm

Justice Delayed Is
Justice Denied



MANA
Manufacturers & Agents
PROFESSIONAL PARTNERS IN PROFITS

A Career Filled With Change

BY JACK FOSTER

Bob Gallagher's rep story mirrors that of many other MANA members. He grew up around the profession. Immediately after graduating from college he took a position as a rep and today he serves as the president of Teeling & Gallagher, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana.

Teeling & Gallagher specializes in components for the transportation segment of the market. This includes all the OEMs and tier suppliers to the automotive, heavy truck, agricultural, aerospace and related markets which provides for a large group of customers in the Midwest.

According to Gallagher, "I've always been fascinated with anything that has wheels or flies, so I love being involved with the various programs and products. My customers are world-class manufacturers and develop some of the best systems in the world so being able to see how

Bob Gallagher at the Indianapolis International Airport leaving on a trip to visit one of the agency's principals.



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Bob Gallagher, president of Teeling & Gallagher, and Dwight Schultz (left), sales engineer, at the front of the agency's main office.

their products are manufactured and how I fit into the equation is a source of pride for me. Transportation has had a massive presence in our market for decades and we've been focused on them as the primary market since we were founded in 1946 because we love the customers and the products."

Considering the origins of his career as a rep, Gallagher explains, "My father was a manufacturers' representative and his job fascinated me as a kid because he knew how things were made and could explain how things were manufactured to me in a way that I could understand. Having the opportunity and developing

the ability to do the same intrigued me and I knew early on that being a manufacturers' representative was something that I was interested in doing."

Upon his graduation from Purdue University, he explains, "I was eager to start my career and found a manufacturers' representative looking for a salesperson in the area, so I focused my efforts with them. I put on the only suit and tie I owned, grabbed my resume and drove to the address listed on the classified ad from the paper. Due to a bit of luck and decent timing, the receptionist found the vice president of sales who was

willing to come out and meet me. He asked about my experience, my college career and what drove my interest in their sales agency. I told him I wanted to be a rep and was willing to do whatever it took to learn the ropes.

"After I left that day, I subsequently got an interview with the owner and was offered a job. My first cold call was successful, and I was hooked!"

He continues that his first boss immediately got him involved in several outside training programs to aid in his career development such as Dale Carnegie, Toastmasters, and any training program that the agency's principals offered. "Ironically, I was in the same Dale Carnegie class as a salesman that worked for my father and we hit it off. He was more experienced than I was, and I knew my father looked at him with high regard so I would pick his brain and ask him questions as much as I could."

Timing Is Everything

As fate would have it, "That salesman had to leave Teeling & Gallagher and find a new job where traveling wasn't required. My father asked him if he knew anyone that might be interested, and he suggested me because he was impressed how I interacted with others in the class and my genuine curiosity to learn more about his job. My father hadn't even considered me for a role within his firm at that point and was honestly resistant to the idea at first. To his credit, he treated me like any other

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applicant but was quite hard on me during the interviewing process. He wanted to make sure I was cut out for his firm and that I would be able to endure the additional scrutiny that his principals would put me through as the owner's son.”

Looking back, Gallagher notes, “I still remember vividly the day that we sat in his office and agreed to work together. He said with a handshake, ‘Welcome to Teeling & Gallagher! This job isn't easy and requires your full dedication to be a success. If it were easy, everyone would be a rep because it's a great job. If it doesn't work out, I won't hesitate to fire you, but we'll still spend holidays together and move on with our lives. Now get to work.’

“As harsh as that may have sounded between a father and his son, I understand it now and appreciate his frankness because he was exactly right.”

Gallagher and his father worked together for 16 years and eventually he negotiated a buyout agreement that allowed him to get into the agency business for himself.

Considering Industry Changes

As he considers the close to 30 years he's spent as an independent rep, Gallagher, just as so many of his rep peers, can't help but take note of the many changes that have occurred in how the job is performed. He explains, “I would propose that in the 27 years I've been in the industry more has changed in the way our

Long-Standing MANA Connection

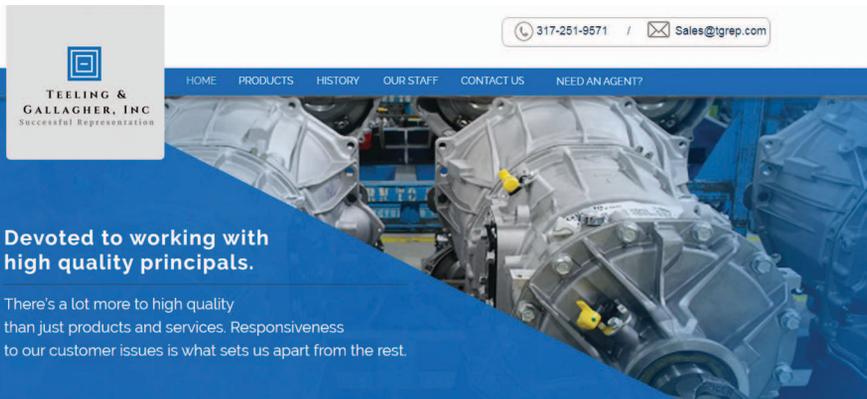
When Bob Gallagher is asked to recount his agency's close to 50-year membership in MANA, he's quick to point out that “MANA has always been a companion and partner since the day I started in the industry. I remember my father gave me a stack of *Agency Sales* magazines when I first started and him telling me to read each one cover-to-cover to get a better understanding of what a rep is. I also remember him poring over each issue of the classified ‘reps wanted’ section to hunt for the next opportunity to talk to a new principal. Those magazines would make the rounds within our office each month and would be tattered and covered with handwritten notes and circled articles to share.”

He goes on to explain, “Reps are very independent thinkers but share a true kinship with each other and I think that MANA is the ultimate link to foster that camaraderie. *Agency Sales* gives each of us a way to connect, share ideas, problem solve, and develop programs for the same basic problems we all face. Maintaining our affiliation with MANA since 1973 has just always been a given because of the connection I feel to my industry, the memories of working with my father and the sound advice that it provides when something occurs and you need a bit of help from someone you can trust.”

Professional Growth

Gallagher continues, “Our membership in the association is also directly important to my personal growth as an agency owner and the future to my firm. In addition, it's affiliation with the Manufacturers' Representatives Educational Research Foundation (MRERF) allowed me to obtain my Certified Professional Manufacturers' Representative (CPMR) designation and learn everything that comes with that training.

“The resources available at the MANA website are expansive and provide great advice for any situation whether its contracts, campaigning for a new line, or how to deal with disputes. I've utilized the complimentary 30 minutes of legal advice from the MANA attorneys for quick questions, which is greatly helpful because they already understand your business and typical issues. I also frequent the LineFinder® to look for new lines, which is a key resource to finding principals who value the function of a manufacturers' rep.”



Knowledge	Experience	Professionalism
In today's business climate, technical knowledge and service to the customer base is extremely important and necessary to function in the business place.	Founded in 1946, our agency has been in business for several decades and is highly regarded in Indiana and Kentucky by both our customers and principals.	We are growing and are willing to add any additional resources to support our activities. The sales people at Teeling & Gallagher, Inc. are highly motivated, result

www.tgrep.com

“I’ve received several comments from prospective principals that our web page is quite helpful....”

business is done during this period than any other segment in time due to technology. The way that I learned to develop projects was to call on a company, find a way to get through the receptionist, ask the buyer for a meeting, take an actual copy of a blueprint with me from that meeting, mail it out with a full written call report, wait two-three weeks until a quote is sent to the customer in the mail and then follow up for the principal. All that has changed as the result of technology.”

He cites everything from e-mail, mobile phones, GPS, texting, computers, voice mail, scanning, internet, social networks, websites, available information on mobile

devices, as having major impacts on the industry demanding more information faster than ever and it continues to grow at a pace unimaginable compared to when he started in this industry. “This insatiable desire for quick information has put more demands on reps to provide quotes and information quicker to their customers. It has also put additional demands to provide customer knowledge, information and feedback to the principal with a quick turnaround.”

Keeping pace with technological change isn’t all that occupies his mind. Gallagher says that “locating new principals that are synergistic to our other lines and to our cus-

tomers base is a process that we take very seriously. I feel that synergy is a major component of a relationship that will endure and be successful for all involved. One of the best ways is through MANA by watching Line-Finder® and keeping our rep profile current. Our group had a web presence early on and we just recently completely redesigned and created a modern webpage (www.tgrep.com) for companies to see who we are, learn about our history, and understand our products.

“I’ve received several comments from prospective principals that our web page is quite helpful in gaining a feel of our group and how we present ourselves and products to the market. We also have associations with some of the key search groups and individual players in the market that match principals with reps in certain territories. While some of these principal opportunities come with companies that aren’t that familiar with reps and our services, these groups do a great job of introducing the sales model to them and helping them through the process of matching up with reps that create a good fit for them.”

Impact of Social Media

In addition to the agency’s modern web page, Gallagher explains that “Social media for us is just another tool in our toolbox to utilize when trying to create a solution to the challenges we face daily. We utilize LinkedIn and find it quite useful and we’ve also put some efforts into Instagram to explore how that might help our presence in the market. We use these platforms to promote our efforts, but we also use them as another source for research and making connections. There are so many forms of content out there and the different forms do sometimes vary in influence, so we gladly explore all of

them to find out as much as we can to benefit our principals.”

If keeping up with technological and social media changes aren't enough to keep him busy, Gallagher notes, “The unknown and unpredictable are the things that can affect our sales agency negatively, and knowing I can do little to prevent these events from happening can be stressful when they occur. This includes everything from shifts in the economy, customer closures, customers moving out of the territory, merger or acquisition of a principal, obsolescence of a customer's product that required our components, etc. To combat all these concerns we do our best to quickly adjust our business for these types of major events, but the bottom line is that these situations can have a significant impact upon the time, energy and efforts already invested into a line or project in a moment's notice.”

Finally, as he looks back over his lengthy career as a rep, Gallagher explains, “One thing I wish I would have learned is to trust my ‘gut’ earlier in my career. I have learned that taking the time to understand what my inner voice is telling me has immense value. Early on, when I weighed out the pros and cons of a situation, I would choose what I thought was the most logical solution even though my instincts didn't always agree. Looking back at those situations, my ‘gut’ was always right even though it wasn't always the safest bet and I've learned to follow those instincts now. Intuition is useful to avoid certain pitfalls because something is telling you it just doesn't feel right, but it can also be a good way to identify an opportunity and I think you need to be open to both scenarios.”

MANA welcomes your comments on this article. Write to us at mana@manaonline.org.



Gallagher (right) and Schultz are seen here hard at work on an RFQ for an upcoming project.



Gallagher driving to a customer for a meeting.