

10

Ways to Strengthen Your Metal Building Sales and Customer Relationships



The demand for metal buildings is at an all-time high.

That statement alone probably got you thinking one of the following:

- ▶ “But what about raw materials costs?”
- ▶ “Aren’t there supply chain issues?”
- ▶ “I don’t believe you.”

Well, it’s true that supply chains haven’t been as reliable since the pandemic hit. And steel prices can be volatile. But that still hasn’t stopped the calls for more pre-engineered metal buildings and products.

WHAT’S DRIVING THIS DEMAND?

As distributors find solutions to unpredictable supply chains and material costs, the consistent ask for metal building products is being driven by several global and domestic factors:

- ▶ New offsite building structures and methods
- ▶ Rapid industrialization in both developing and developed countries
- ▶ The need for industrial storage spaces and warehouses
- ▶ Calls for cost-effective, longer-lasting housing
- ▶ Lower labor costs
- ▶ Greater design flexibility

So what?

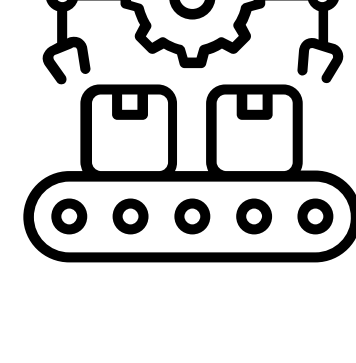
If you’re a distributor who enjoys money, being prepared to meet your customers’ evolving needs will help build your reputation as a go-to supplier and strengthen your existing relationships. And that all leads to more business and repeat business.

As suppliers of metal building products for distributors across the United States, the American Building Components (ABC) team has a firsthand understanding of what today’s consumers are looking for in products *and* services.

Here are 10 ways you can satisfy their needs quickly and at a fair cost.

1. Product selection

While even simple jobs are becoming more customized, you’ll want to have certain metal building materials on hand. You can gain more margin by having these building materials always in stock:



- ▶ Stock roof and wall panel lengths
- ▶ Common trims (gable, ridge, eave, endwall, sidewall) and accessories (post-trim, screws, fasteners)
- ▶ Closures and tape

You’ll also want samples of trim and panels, as allowing your customer to tangibly feel a product’s quality is the best sales tactic.

2. The impact of incomplete ordering information

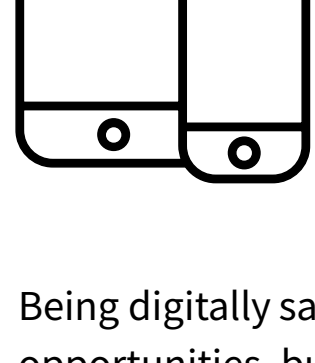
While a bar napkin and pen may work for orders in a pinch, surprisingly, it’s not the ideal way to order from your supplier. It can be difficult to decipher the exact needs and specifications of your order through all the scribbles and chicken wing sauce.

Always provide completed orders to your suppliers. Add in as much detail as you can about your customer’s project, too. Extra information never hurts, but a lack of it can.



Incomplete or incorrect orders may delay your customers’ project timelines, which will impact your reputation. And that’s especially detrimental in a word-of-mouth business.

3. Have the right resources

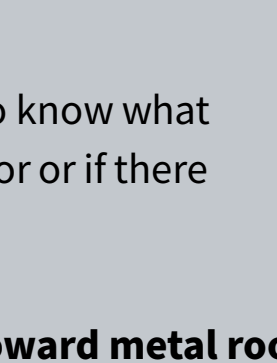


Having the right products is important, but many forget about the supporting cast around them. Besides the tangible product brochures, color charts and display boards, you’ll also want these resources available digitally whenever possible. Customers today expect to do business online just as easily as in person. So, provide their preferred customer experience by being ready to direct them to valuable online resources.

Being digitally savvy also allows you to connect with customers over social media for social selling opportunities, build a rapport and earn their trust.

4. Ask the right questions

Gone are the days when a distributor was a simple merchant. Passively exchanging goods and services won’t grow your customer base but being engaged and interested in your customers will.

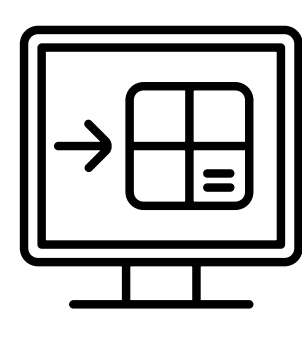


In order to provide them with the best products and solutions, you need to know what they’re building, where they’re building, what the structure is being used for or if there are any esthetic considerations, etc.

Try these starter questions. Some are general, but some are geared toward metal roofs and systems, as they have their own intricacies such as takeoffs. This will help your customer get everything they need for their metal roofing or building project.

- ▶ Do you know what materials you need?
Do you need help putting together a material list?
- ▶ When do you need the materials?
- ▶ Is this a new build or addition?
- ▶ Do you need a takeoff? If so, do you have a roof or siding plan to share?
- ▶ Are you trying to match another product on the jobsite?
- ▶ Do you have a preferred vendor, or a brand you’d like to get product from?
- ▶ Do you have any architectural plans? (i.e., diagrams of roofing projects are useful if a takeoff is required)
- ▶ Have you installed this product before?

5. The need for speed (and why you should be ordering online)



Of the many benefits metal buildings afford, speed is at the top. Pre-engineered structures go up very quickly, allowing contractors who’ve mastered scheduling to move from one job to the next with virtually no downtime.

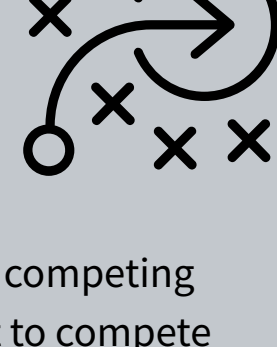
Distributors need to keep pace. We understand that may not be realistic due to supply chain inefficiencies – but there are ways around that:

- ▶ **Consider working with suppliers who’ve overcome supply chain issues and rely on their own networks and partnerships.** For example, ABC has its own integrated supply chain built over years and years in the industry. That means reliable access to materials and products, which we can quickly pass to our partner distributors. Another solution may be a stocking program, which allows for quicker sales.
- ▶ **Take advantage of eCommerce.** Everything can be ordered online, and that includes building materials. Pre-engineered structures are more accurate in quoting, and makes it easier to bulk or repeat order. Plus, the ability to track orders allows you to keep your customers in the loop on potential delays. Believe us – they appreciate the transparency.

Also keep in mind that today’s customers are looking for more customized solutions. So, if you’re able to quickly turn around special orders, there’s a great opportunity to build sales.

6. Know your competition

It’s impossible to game plan if you’re not sure what you’re up against. Understanding your local market, the types of construction jobs being completed and what’s available in the area allows you to seize opportunities no one else is taking advantage of.



For example, there may be a regional roll former down the block who’ll be competing for roofing projects. In this scenario, the distributor would understand that to compete for business, they’d need to provide affordable solutions that compare to roll forming. So, the distributor should steer the customer towards economical solutions to find that competitive price-quality balance.

7. Why reputation matters



You may have noticed a recurring theme throughout most of the points we’ve shared. And that’s how each of them impacts your reputation.

From our experience, there’s nothing more valuable in this industry than a strong reputation. It gets you referrals. It gets you repeat business.

Delivering the speed, knowledge, products and value-added services today’s contractors or dedicated DIYers expect will do more for your business than, say, offering discounts or something else that’s fleeting.

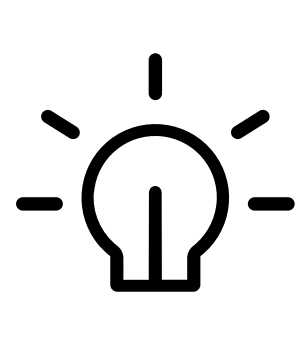
8. Order extra sides

Like at a restaurant, you’ll always want to order extra sides. We’ve had several distributors contact us with an urgent need for a single product that may have been overlooked in the order.

That’s costly. It’s extra freight charges, and a delayed project schedule. That’s bad business for you and your customer. So to avoid being one panel short of a wall or roof system, we suggest ordering extra materials so you’re prepared for unexpected requests. That small bit of forethought can be huge in building a relationship with your customers.



9. Being knowledgeable pays



Educating your team about the products and services you offer will help you earn the trust of new customers and solidify relationships with existing ones.

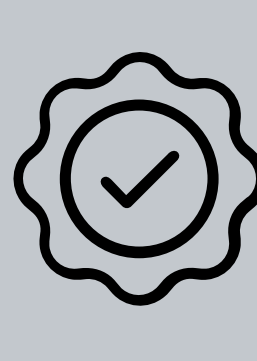
While some builders and contractors you work with will have solid knowledge of building materials and practices, not all will. They’re looking for you to be their partner, not just their distributor.

Product knowledge training for your staff allows them to recommend solutions that will be most beneficial for their customers’ projects and bottom lines. They’ll see your team go the extra mile. And they’ll know who to trust and turn to when they need project advice again (and they will).

10. Quality above all else

If your products are subpar or product quality starts to slip, builders and contractors won’t hesitate to look for a distributor that can reliably provide that higher-quality product.

The importance of reliability and quality extends to the service and lead time side of the business as well. Long and unpredictable lead times and service without a sense of urgency limit how profitable a contractor or builder can be. So, they’ll look elsewhere for someone that can keep up, without compromising quality.



Putting it into practice

Strengthening your metal building material sales and customer relationships is all about understanding more than your customers want and providing it in a fast and cost-effective manner. You’ll need more than just quality products – you’ll need the **resources, tools and information** to help them overcome their project roadblocks, too.

So work together with your customers by being more than a distributor. Be a partner. Then your sales will go through the roof. (With any luck, it will be a metal one.)

As easy as ABC.

ABC is a trusted retailer for metal building products, supplying distributors with frame systems, roofs and other high-quality building materials and accessories – all at reliable lead times and cost.

Visit our [website](#) to partner with us or, if you have an urgent timeline, create an account for fast online ordering.