

# Building Stronger Relationships

Practical Ways To Work More Effectively with Distributors and Manufacturers

**B**uilders in the Plain Communities are known for quality workmanship, honesty, and dependability. These strengths have built long standing demand for your construction services, especially in agricultural, post-frame, and light commercial markets.

As the building industry has continued to change, many suppliers, manufacturers, dealers, and distributors now rely heavily on digital communication which can create challenges for some portions of the Plain Communities.

Strong business relationships are still possible and can be very successful when builders set up communication channels in advance and have a plan to stay informed.

## Increasingly Digital Business World

Most large building products manufacturers and distributors communicate at least partially through email, online portals, digital price lists, and app-based contractor programs. These tools are designed for speed and scale, but they often assume anytime internet access.

When builders don't respond to an email or online request, suppliers may mistakenly believe there is no interest or that the message has been received and there are no questions, when, in reality, the message may never have been seen.

The construction industry moves quickly. Prices change, products evolve, and contractor programs come and go. Builders who rely only on word of mouth may miss important opportunities.

By staying organized, maintaining trusted relationships, and communicating clearly about preferences, builders can stay informed without compromising their values.

### 1. Take a Proactive Approach

Builders can strengthen outside business

relationships by being clear and intentional about how they prefer to work. The majority of suppliers and dealers are happy to adjust their processes or formats to accommodate those preferences. Make sure that key suppliers and dealers understand your preferred method of communication and have your up-to-date contact information, which could include the mailing address or phone number where you want key business information communicated.

### 2. Choose a Consistent Point of Contact

Many successful builders work directly in-person with a trusted dealer, driver, bookkeeper, or business partner who regularly also interacts digitally with the major manufacturers or other parts of the distribution channel. Having one known contact that is available for regularly-occurring in-person communication helps prevent missed messages that may have been communicated digitally. Don't have one of these points of contact? Don't be afraid to ask your supplier or dealer for one – most would love to help.

### 2. Keep a Central Information Binder

Making and maintaining a binder of the most updated product information for each manufacturer or supplier can be a powerful business tool. Many of these items are available in digital formats on companies' websites, but physical copies of brochures, color lists, warranties, price pages, and delivery schedules can be obtained by directly requesting from the manufacturer or by picking up the physical items from your preferred local dealer location. It is critical to ask periodically regarding any changes to the product offering and replace with the most up-to-date physical assets.

### 3. Schedule Regular Check Ins

Rather than waiting for changes to arrive unexpectedly, builders can schedule monthly or quarterly in-person meetings with key manufacturing or distribution

representatives. These meetings help builders stay ahead of price changes, new products, and program deadlines.

### 4. Ask for Information in the Right Format

Most suppliers are willing to adapt if they understand the need. Asking for printed copies, mailed updates, or in-person explanations often leads to better communication than trying to fit into digital systems that don't work well for everyone.

## Making the Most of Relationships

Local dealers and distributors are often the strongest bridge between Plain Community builders and manufacturers. These partners understand regional needs and can explain programs, provide materials, and advocate on a builder's behalf.

Building loyalty with a nearby dealer through consistent business and open communication, often results in better service, clearer information, and fewer surprises.

## Mutual Respect Builds Strong Business

Strong partnerships do not require abandoning tradition. They require understanding.

Manufacturers and distributors benefit from the reliability and craftsmanship of Plain Community builders. Builders benefit from suppliers who respect their communication style and provide information in usable ways.

When both sides communicate with patience, clarity, and respect, business relationships grow stronger, more efficient, and more profitable for everyone involved.

In the end, good business is still built the same way it always has been on trust, consistency, and reliability. **PB**