



## Beyond the Brand Manager

For many exporters, eighty percent or more of their distributor interaction filters through a distributor brand manager.

If you are lucky, this energetic university graduate completes your reports and serves as a capable advocate with the distributor sales team. Brand owners frequently demonstrate excessive loyalty to their brand managers as local heroes

that rescue the export manager from periodic emergencies. In reality, the distributor brand manager is a “middle man,” communicating with the generals that deliver the results at key account and store level.

International brand building is a team sport. Winners are companies that form strong relationships with all functional leaders in a distributor organization. Web meeting tools like Zoom and Teams facilitate easier direct linkage with key distributor personnel. Discussed below are Export Solutions’ tips for moving “Beyond the Brand Manager” to accelerate your business to the next level.



**Export Solutions**

Distributor Identification Experts

## Strategic Services

Contact Us for  
*Export Solutions*

1. Identify Best in Class Distributors: 96 Countries
2. Best Practices Export Strategy
3. Distributor Management Workshops
4. Export 101: Let's Get Started
5. New Market Prioritization and Launch Plan
6. Personal Distributor Introductions: 96 Countries
7. Walmart International
8. Distributor Contracts, Margins, and Fees
9. Meeting Speaker
10. International Strategy Expert

### 1. Key Account Managers (KAMs) Are the Power Players

KAMs are the major account experts and own the buyer relationships. Direct feedback from them provides valuable, realistic insights. Most distributors have weekly KAM meetings that are worthwhile to join to discuss a key priority. Roll up your sleeves and become visible with the sales people “carrying the bag.”

### 2. Field Sales Teams Control the In-Store Show Room

Typically, a distributor’s store-level merchandising team reports to the sales director, a few “hand-offs” away from the brand manager. Retail stores represent the place where export dreams are translated to cash in the register. Field managers juggle a large basket of priorities for their sales army. Fund a sales contest and you will build loyalty.

### 3. Follow the Money to the CFO

How well do you know the CFO at your distributors? The finance department is the cash hub, approving orders, handling payments, and guiding the distributor’s financial health. Establish a relationship with the CFO when all is well, as it will pay dividends when a financial crisis erupts.

### 4. Meet the Digital Team

E-commerce development represents a growth initiative everywhere. Many distributors hire a small, young team. Create “First One in Benefits” by partnering with this group at this early stage of team evolution.

### 5. Treat Distributor CEO as a VIP

CEOs are busy, stretched by brand owners, customers, employees, and shareholders. Find ways to engage the distributor CEO in your business. Consider quarterly Zoom dates and extend an offer to join your distributor advisory board. Invite him to visit your company headquarters for a first-class experience and a meeting with your CEO.

A favorite part of any market visit is “management by walking around.” I love to visit every department. Smile to everyone, handing out a small gift with your company logo, and say thanks for your help. Today’s travel guidelines limit these trips, but challenge us to adapt this practice in a virtual way.

We appreciate our brand managers, but must remember that our partnership service agreement is with the entire distributor, not just one person.

Good luck!

**Greg Seminara**  
greg@exportsolutions.com