

United Hardware Is The Right Alternative

I am often asked why hardware retailers who have changed wholesalers chose United Hardware. While you can't generalize, there seems to be a common thread.

It's fair to say that virtually every retailer who changes wholesalers is unhappy with one or more aspects of the relationship with his or her current vendor. Since it's a lot of work to change wholesalers, the unhappiness is usually pretty great. Although it might be expected most retailers change affiliations to get lower merchandise costs, the reality is quite different. It might seem ironic, but the two most common reasons given are either that the current wholesaler is viewed as being too intrusive in the retailer's business or that it is not involved enough. Recently, the wholesaler's financial viability has also become an issue, particularly with TruServ's retailers.

It might seem from these reasons that the wholesaler can't win. However, both types of dissatisfaction really stem from the wholesaler's desire to establish uniform standards and to largely ignore those dealers who choose not to support the corporate model. The retailer who chooses not to follow the corporate line in effect becomes a second-class citizen.

Given this scenario, why have so many of these retailers turned to United Hardware? It is because our employees—both in the field and home office—are able to show the retailers that United Hardware respects and is supportive of their idea of what they want their stores to stand for. We will not try to make their stores fit our model of a "perfect" hardware store. At the same time, we can show them that, like the bigger wholesalers, we have the tools available to help them fine tune their stores to fit their market demographics or to help them plan for an expansion or a second store. And our customer service and other support staff are always available to answer questions or help out with a problem. Finally, we can show retailers that our financial situation is secure and that we intend to be around for a lot of years to come.

And that's what appeals to so many retailers looking for a new home.



Dave Heider, President