

ADVANTAGES

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO SELLING

JANUARY 2018

REP OF THE YEAR

Eight figures of revenue and 138% growth is just the beginning for Touchstone's

Mike Welker

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LARRY ALFORD

AXIS PROMOTIONS (ASI/128263)



20
Number of years
as a multimillion-
dollar producer

A 30-year veteran of the promotional products industry, Larry Alford has weathered the winds of change, adapting to technological advancements and shifting sales philosophies. He's come a long way from selling souvenirs at Fenway Park; now the vice president of sales at Top 40 distributor Axis Promotions, Alford specializes in building strong relationships with clients that need a strategic partner to creatively change their consumers' behavior.

"I'm always focusing on the client relationship regardless of the size of the order," Alford says. "If I can help my client deliver a great program

and they can be proud of the work that we're all doing, we've succeeded. Once our client knows we care about their business' success and their personal success, we become a partner and not a salesperson or vendor."

Challenges simply don't faze the Boston native. One of his largest and longest-standing clients was launching a new product that looked like a formal dress shoe but felt like a sneaker. As part of the roll out, the company wanted gift bags filled with similar "unstructured" items. Along with a spring pen and raw-edge journal, Alford came up with a vintage dyed sweatshirt turned inside out; the company's logo was printed on the inside fleece material and the tags and labels were all left in the shirt. He tested three different fleece brands to determine which could hold the best imprint.

"My screen printer didn't want to do this at first, because they never had before," Alford says. "However, we worked together to flawlessly execute it, teaching me again that we can't settle on the easy way out. There's always a solution if you partner correctly."

In addition to being a multimillion-dollar producer for over 20 years, Alford has grown Axis' Boston office from two to 10 people while overseeing 38% team sales growth thanks to the addition of several new clients, including a very large charitable organization. He's also led internal company-wide training on strategically utilizing self-promos to open opportunities and close business.

"In this business, I have a license to have multiple personalities during the work day," says Alford, who starts each day with a 4:20 a.m. bike ride. "I need to be the voice of the client to my factory and the voice of the factory to the client. Sometimes, that voice changes based on the situation. I then need to be the voice of Axis and my own voice. If I explain these four voices to my partners correctly, I'm able to convey all situations: the good, bad and ugly without losing a relationship and usually growing them." - JC