



Sustainability

We are being called almost daily about swapping suppliers. You need to understand this cannot be a short-term answer.

Many of the better manufacturers have enacted moratoriums on opening new accounts so there needs to be a compelling reason to open the account

It is time to evaluate your options? Time to make a commitment... If you really want to make a change be prepared:

- Set up cash/ prepay account only
- Commit to the new manufacturer; \$100,000 minimum
- Purchase the necessary sales aids and samples.
- Attend Training to learn the line and procedures

Making Comparisons

As manufacturer's reps we are often asked how one manufacturer compares with another. Of course, the first question we are asked is about price. There are many other categories you need to review to make a good comparison.

Let's answer the first question first. In our 100 plus years of combined kitchen experience we have discovered there are 4 distinct price categories:

The four groups are as follows:

- Group 1 - Entry level – \$100-\$300 / box - Stock sizes with limited modifications and colors, includes RTA. Most often an import brand
- Group 2 - Mid-Grade or Builder grade \$300 -\$450 / box - limited customization more wood species, SKU's and colors than group 1
- Group 3 - Semi Custom – \$450 - \$600 / box – Custom modifications, more door styles, wood specie & colors with color matching available.
- Group 4 - Full Custom – \$600 - ++ - Unlimited modifications, species and colors - Finest finishes and materials.

To arrive at the price per box we designed an 8' X 15' L shaped kitchen with a 60" island including fillers panels and moldings and then divided by the number of cabinets. In our case there are 17 cabinet boxes.

With many lines offering multiple price points and materials selections getting an accurate comparison is nearly impossible. The key is to select similar box materials, wood species and construction details.

Most dealers provide a plan with indiscernible nomenclature making an accurate comparison very difficult, that's why we created our own design and price comps. I did not include our price comps in the article because I am not here to sell you; the purpose of this article is to help your thinking and selection process.

This is not an exact science and is affected by selection of materials, it does get close. For example, we discovered you cannot find a group 3 cabinet at group 2 pricing. The cost to manufacture similar cabinets with similar construction and features does not vary more than about 10%. Each of these categories has a specific price point and you cannot ask for one and expect to pay for a lower category.

Questions to consider

Do you like the manufacturer's representative? He or she is your first link to the manufacturer. What's their product knowledge and how many years have they been representing the manufacturer? You are going to ask them some hard questions and need honest answers.

A big question today; is the manufacturer a privately- owned company or a large conglomerate of manufacturer's answering only to the bottom-line shareholders?

A number of dealers look online for manufacturers reviews. We have found this to be very misleading and inaccurate. Oftentimes a consumer review is years old and few ever take the time to write a good review. It is a much better idea to get the names and numbers of other dealers for their opinions are more accurate as to what is important to you and your business.

I suggest you ask the following questions from any manufacturer before you consider adding them. Start by looking at your current lines and see what you do and do not like. Then look at others.

- What price category are they in?
- Where is the manufacturer located?
- How long have they been in business?
- What is their reputation?

- Who owns the company?
- Who runs the company?
- Are they vertically integrated or an OEM?
- How many other dealers are in your marketplace?
- How quickly does customer service return calls and answer questions?
- What is the acknowledgment process?
- Are acknowledgments accurate the first time?
- Are sign-offs required?
- What is lead time for acknowledgments?
- What is product quality in general?
- What is standard product lead time?
- What is the warranty program? What is lead time?
- What is the rush order program? What is lead time?
- Are incentive programs available?
- Do programs offer current, styles and colors?
- Are dealer's loyalty programs available?
- What is the display program? Discounts, Rebates?
- What type of sales-aids are available?
- What is the standard cabinet box construction?
- Is there an optional upgrade/ downgrade box available?
- What brand is the functional hardware?
- How accurate are the design programs- 2020, Pro Kitchen etc?
- How often are they updated?
- Is the catalog easy to use, accurate, when was it last updated?
- Do they offer an on-line ordering program?
- Does the manufacturer offer good marketing materials?
- Is the website current and easy to use?
- Is shipping on-time and complete?
- How are cabinets packaged?
- How do they ship? common carrier, dedicated carrier or factory trucks?
- Do they ship to a freight forwarder or warehouse?
- Do they offer in-home delivery?

And above all ask the rep for referrals from other dealers.