

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE IN THE VALUE CHAIN

Regardless of what we are considering purchasing, there are more product choices than ever before. The number of options, and decisions we must make, when buying anything from automobiles to zippers, continually increases. As purchasers, at times we would probably prefer fewer choices if for no other reason than to make our lives simpler!

Before discussing the importance of product knowledge, let's define the Value Chain. The Value Chain can be defined as that combination of product, service, and price that results in the customer receiving worth in proportion to the price paid. Value is delivered through the chain, comprised of all the persons and organizations that work together to define and deliver a solution to the customer's problem or need.

Receiving superior value does not mean paying the lowest price, or paying the highest price in order to receive the highest worth. Value results from how well the purchase price compares with the cost savings/productivity improvements that result from the solved problem. Product knowledge, communicated by the seller to the buyer, is a service element in the value chain that helps the customer understand how a proposed solution will respond to the need expressed by the customer, or diagnosed by the seller.

When most of us are considering a purchase, what we most want is:

- a) Clear statements of features, benefits, data, and other information that relates to how we will go about making a decision re: product selection.
- b) A manufacturer with a good reputation for their products and an equally good reputation for standing behind those products with service, support, and warranties.
- c) Sales personnel, unobtrusive, but available when needed, who first try to understand our needs before recommending a solution.
- d) Sales personnel who are knowledgeable about the products they represent and who can help us understand how the product will look and work in my application.
- e) Availability or delivery of the product when we need it, and in accordance to the promise made by the seller.

Arlink recently gathered its North American sales team for a three-day training program where many aspects of achieving the above goals were discussed. Our group was comprised of representatives from fifteen different sales representative companies, almost a 100% attendance. In total, 46 persons gathered together including ten Arlink staff.

The majority of our meeting time was spent on product training to ensure our Representatives maintain a thorough knowledge of our products and how to best match them with customer needs. As the attendees had varying levels of experience with Arlink, from just a few months to almost two decades, information presented covered everything from the basics to more advanced applications! Having such broad based representation in these meetings was invaluable.

Customer project examples were presented and discussed, and everyone came away with new ideas to bring to their customers – new ways to deliver even more value through the "Value Chain". In addition to reviewing all the Arlink Product families, options and accessories, Arlink introduced 277 new items that are now standard parts available from our price list.



Arlink Sales Managers, Jim Daly and James Anderson, lead a brain storming session on customer needs and value elements.

Attendees observed that our customers' needs and applications are becoming more challenging, and their value standards are also rising. Arlink recognizes this, and continually takes steps to increase the value of our products and service solutions.

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PRODUCT NEWS

Arlink Product Offering Expansion: OVER 200 NEW PRODUCTS

Arlink has expanded options and accessories available to customers by adding more than 200 items to its product offering.

Structural Components have been added to create 24" (61cm) and 30" (76cm) modules. This increases Arlink standard module sizes to six standard industrial sizes, and creates more options for customizing workstations, especially useful in "split bay" configurations and where rack mount instruments are utilized.



Worksurface Assemblies have been created to serve a variety of applications. Right Hand, Left hand, and Center "scalped" worksurfaces are designed to be integrated into production lines, usually in conjunction with conveyor applications. These are available in both standard and static dissipative materials. A convenient Pull Out Worksurface allows users to access a small, auxiliary worksurface which stores when not needed. A new worksurface material, Colorlith, which is popular in laboratory applications, has been added to the mix.

Storage options to complement the two new module sizes were also added. These include wire and steel shelving and accessory cabinets with flip up, locking doors. Wire shelves are now also available with reverse lips which allow for the sliding of workboxes across the shelf without interference. Drawers with full extension slides and loop pulls have been added, popular in laboratory and office applications. Pegboard organizing panels help make good use of the vertical space in front of the user.

Material Handling options have been expanded to include a variety of workstation conveyor modules, and Arlink now offers several types of flat belt conveyors. Arlink will also integrate the conveyor of your choice into one of our workstation systems. (See Newsletter #3 from the archives section of our Web site for details)

Production Accessories added to the line up include ESD Mat Kits in sizes to match each of our standard module widths, fabric covered modesty panels for acoustical control and aesthetics, additional lamp bracket sizes for special applications, 20 AMP power beams, and more.

Seating of the highest quality has been added to the product line. (See the feature article below). Proper seating is critical to assuring productivity and reducing injury. Quality seating will accommodate any person and will last for years.

Arlink Ergonomic Seating

Arlink's new Industrial Strength, Ergonomic Seating Line is designed to meet the challenges of reducing strain and fatigue while providing full adjustability and comfort.



Product features include:

- Contoured seats and backs for support and comfort all day long
- Constructed with environmentally friendly, CFC-free foams
- Built-in lumbar support helps maintain proper back posture
- Fixed or adjustable arms rest
- Chairs equipped with tile casters; carpet casters and glides are available

Seating is available in chair or stool configuration.

ARLINK AWARDED TOP GRADES FOR VENDOR PERFORMANCE BY SOLID STATE CONTROLS

Since 1962, Solid State Controls of Columbus, Ohio (www.solidstatecontrolsinc.com) has been designing and manufacturing uninterruptible power supply and battery back up systems for industry. In their words, they provide "The Power To Keep Businesses in Business".

Solid State Controls routinely conducts vendor performance analysis on a regular basis. After all, to fulfill their mission to their customers, they must have reliable vendors as well. Solid State analyzes performance in three key categories: Percentage of On-Time Deliveries; Average Days Late; and Percentage of Difference on Invoice. Arlink recently received a vendor performance analysis from Solid State Controls.

There are 4 rating levels for each area. Superior performers receive a rating of either "Keep up the Good Work/Great Job", and ratings decline from there to "Needs Attention", "Needs Significant Improvement", and "Contact Purchasing To Schedule Conference."

For Percentage of On-Time Deliveries, Arlink received a rating was of 96%, "Keep up the Good Work", the highest rating possible.

For Average Days Late, Arlink received a rating of "0", "Great Job!", the highest rating possible. For Percentage of Difference on Invoice, Arlink's rating was "Less than 1.4%", "Keep up the Good Work", again, the best rating possible.

States Cindy Thornton, Logistics Manager at Solid State Controls, "Our goal is to create partnerships with our suppliers. Cost of quality is an important concern."

According to Shirley Keller of KDF Company, Arlink's local representative in the territory, "This further exemplifies the excellence of Arlink's performance and shows in black and white the quality of Arlink and all of the people involved."

These excellent ratings confirm that Arlink is the best when it comes to product and service.



ARLINK ANNOUNCES ALLIANCE WITH LEADING ERGONOMICS AUTHORITY

Arlink Workstation Systems is pleased to announce an exciting new alliance with Dr. Alan Hedge, internationally acknowledged expert in ergonomics. "Arlink is very pleased to have formed this alliance with Dr. Hedge, an undisputed leading worldwide authority in his field," explained Ray Gottsleben, V.P. Sales and Marketing at Arlink. "Our customers will benefit greatly from this major initiative."



Dr. Hedge is a Full Professor in the Department of Design and Environmental Analysis at Cornell University where he directs the Human Factors and Ergonomics teaching and research programs. Prior to that, he ran the Graduate Program in Applied Psychology and Ergonomics at Aston University, Birmingham, U.K. and was also an Honorary Research Fellow at the Institute of Occupational Health, University of Birmingham, U.K.

His research and teaching activities have focused on issues of design and workplace ergonomics as these affect the health, comfort and productivity of workers. He has co-authored a book on healthy buildings, published 18 chapters and over 130 articles in journals and magazines on topics in ergonomics. He authored the ergonomics section for Microsoft Encarta 2000 and has published topic sections in several encyclopedias.

Dr. Hedge believes that businesses who do not pay attention to good ergonomics are wasting money. "The goal of ergonomics is to boost productivity while also increasing satisfaction, comfort and safety. Ergonomics does not have to be expensive and it is always a benefit rather than a costly drain to companies. Good ergonomics is always great economics."

PROJECT FOCUS

ISSAQUAH DENTAL LABORATORIES ENDORSES ARLINK WORKSTATIONS

In the little town of Issaquah, Washington, there was a lab that made bridges and crowns for dentists. Issaquah Dental Labs (IDL) worked out of a small office building and used an old house for their overflow. The new owner and his partners were a very forward thinking group who wanted to upgrade their business and move it to a new facility.

After considering different cabinets and fixtures offerings, many from companies that specifically serve the dental lab industry, they decided that no one had the type of equipment they desired at a price they were willing to pay. On their travels they visited a facility where they saw the Arlink Series 8000 Agile Workstation System in use. They contacted Arlink who in turn asked Mike Desimone of Eclipse Marketing to visit them.

IDL tried two demo workstations in the old house and they became quickly convinced of Arlink's value. They then bought four additional units for this facility. Mike was provided a floor plan of the new facility and, using Arlink Layout Assistant software, developed workstation designs and facility layouts that resulted in winning the business.



After a year of planning, the result was approximately 70 workstations in this new showcase facility. In addition to their primary function as a technician's station, Arlink Series 8000 units were used throughout the facility in office, shipping, receiving, and warehousing applications. The ease with which Arlink is assembled permitted the customer to perform his own installation. This was a tremendous cost savings vs. paying a contractor to complete installation. The owners were so impressed with Arlink and the support received, they offered to open up their offices and production floor for viewing by potential new Arlink accounts.



THE IMPORTANCE OF PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE IN THE VALUE CHAIN

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Some examples include our Conveyor Workstation Systems, our integrated Flow Rack/Workstation modules, the introduction of the Arlink line of Industrial Strength, Ergonomic Seating, quick response to requests for modifications to standard products, and the computerized specifying and layout service we provide at no charge to our customers.

Making sure that those who interface directly with our customers can accurately and completely answer questions about products is a critical link in the value chain.

ISSAQUAH DENTAL LABORATORIES ENDORSES ARLINK WORKSTATIONS

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According to Larry Searles, President of IDL, "Through our association with Arlink and Eclipse Marketing, IDL has achieved all of its goals with regard to providing our technicians with high quality, durable, and flexible workstations. The support we received from both companies throughout the planning, ordering, and installation process was first rate. Their willingness to work closely with us to meet our specific needs has resulted in a true business partnership that is helping our business achieve the success we dreamed of."

Arlink's adaptable workstation systems provide cost effective workstation solutions in limitless applications across a wide array of industries. Let an Arlink representative review your workstation needs and show you how we can help improve your operations.

ARLINK 
Designed for a Changing World

Arlink Recognizes Sales Achievements



Arlink recognized its best sales performers at its North American Sales Conference held at the Luxor Hotel in Las Vegas this past June.

Once again, the competition was strong with many of Arlink's field sales groups contributing strongly to customer satisfaction and increased Arlink sales.

Recognized this year for excellence and achievement were the following organizations and individuals:

Representative Of The Year

Torenko & Associates
(Sunnyvale, Texas)

Distributor Of The Year

Contact East
(North Andover, Massachusetts)

WOW! Project Of The Year

Elaine Banks
for JDS Uniphase
(Arbell, Inc., Burlington, Ontario)

Sales Achievement Award For Best Performance to Goal Representative Category

Circuit Technology
(Holly Springs, North Carolina)

Sales Achievement Award For Best Performance to Goal Distributor Category

Campbell Systems
(Blairsville, Pennsylvania)

We look forward to continuing the pursuit of excellence in partnership with the growing family of Arlink Representatives and Distributors and to recognizing their continuing achievements.

Staff Changes

New To Arlink



Sandy Lowe
Customer Service



Ed Folga
Northwest Regional Manager

New Position



Jerry Guzzetta
Southwest Regional Manager