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Marketing to Engineers:

Summary of Findings/Conclusions Mind of the Engineer Study Cahners Research, 2001

This is a summary of key findings and conclusions from the Cahners Research Mind of the Engineer study, groundbreaking research conducted by the publishing giant to understand how engineers make buying decisions. The study was conducted in November, 2000 among 983 design engineers. The research was conducted via an anonymous questionnaire with a response rate of 20%.

It's increasingly hard to get through to time-pressed engineers:

Time to market pressures have increased dramatically. The time it took for a design to travel from concept to market launch has dropped from 35 weeks in 1992 to just 7 in 2001.

Engineers today work on 15.3 projects a year, four more than in 1995.

Vendors need to work harder to be noticed. Engineers used to see four salespeople a week (1992). Now they see less than one. "I will do anything – fax, Internet, etc. – to gather information other than seeing the salesperson," said one engineer. Staff reductions are partly to blame, as there are fewer engineers handling more projects leaving less time for sales calls.

Companies have frustrated their engineering customers:

Companies have damaged their credibility. During 2000, 42% of products arrived late, and many failed to perform up to specifications.

Eighty percent of companies are looking to cut their vendor lists.

Ninety-five percent say they do not receive adequate after-sale support from their vendors.

The audience is changing:

With layoffs and belt-tightening during 2001, those engineers left on the job are the most talented and technically-savvy.

Engineers report that half of what they learned in school is obsolete 2-3 years after graduation.

The number of marketing/sales members on development teams has doubled in five years; 52% say their design teams include someone from marketing or sales.

The number of potential “wins” is becoming more scarce:

Fewer design concepts never see the light of day: 53% of all designs never made it into production. Vendors need to be visible during the early design stages of a project, though even that is no guarantee of long-term business. Forty-two percent of designed-in components do NOT extend into production.

Conclusions:

Because component/vendor decisions are fluid, companies must remain visible during the entire stage of the development cycle, from early design concept stages through production and even after market launch.

Engineers are seeking companies that are reliable, stable and present. They can't come in and out of the process in order to get what are increasingly fewer account wins. Engineers show more loyalty to stable companies that provide tangible product support.

With the pressure to cut vendor lists, companies need to work hard to remain on their customers' short lists.

Engineers are so time-pressed they have less motivation – and resources -- to find the bleeding edge but will incorporate components into their designs that are good enough. With the overpromises of performance and delivery so common in 2000, they often don't believe what you tell them, and they don't have time to listen to you anyway unless you're solving their problem of the day. They are very focused on daily fires and have trouble paying attention to long-term areas where they do not see a burning need right now.

Time pressures have lessened the desire to work with unproven or beta product designs. They value products that are proven and have less time to take risks.

Brand loyalty is based more today on after-sales support and expertise, less on specs and features. They want support, reliability, availability, dependability.