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Webinar Executive Summary

Webinar Title: Selling Tips for Grease

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Presenters: Gordon Dillaman – Sr. Account Manager
Doug Rice - Sr. Product Specialist

Presenters are Gordon Dillaman and Doug Rice. Gordon is a Senior Account Manager for Lubricant Sales and has 40 years of experience in lubricants. Doug is a Senior Product Specialist for Grease Technology and has 27 years of experience in lubricants. Subjects to be covered are Grease Sales Tips, North American Market Overview and Grease Basics.

Everyone uses grease and it is the most profitable product category. It is important to know your audience and to have a plan for selling them. It is important to know the kinds of products used in the industry you are targeting, your competitors and the type of buyer. You should have a written plan that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound. Your plan should target your existing customers, specific industries and sectors overlooked by others. Knowledge is the key to success. Know your product line, your customer and your competitor.

It is critical to ask certain questions. You need to know what they are currently using, the application, the key characteristics they need and if their current product is meeting expectations. You need to know that there are pitfalls in a greasing program – NLGI Grade, wrong base oil, too little grease, too much grease and incompatibility – among others.

Use the tools that are available to you. In addition to your CITGO representative and the Product Answer Line, there are Product Guides, Industry Brochures and Application and Performance Charts. An example of a comparison chart was presented introducing the soon to be released Lithoplex EM Full Synthetic Grease.

It is important to know the market. North American Grease Production was more than 450 Million pounds in 2019 (the latest data reported by NLGI). This was a slight decrease from 2018. North American Production by Thickener shows that Lithium Complex and Conventional Lithium greases are still the dominant thickeners. Lithium Complex greases made up 42% and Conventional Lithium greases made up 25% of NA Production in 2019. The next most were Aluminum Complexes and Calcium Sulfonates – each accounting for 8% of NA Production.



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Polyureas came in at 6% and Anhydrous Calcium came in at 5%. Clays, Calcium Complexes and other thickeners only account for a total of 8%.

There are a few trends in the grease market of which a prepared salesperson should be aware. Volume remains fairly stable. Complex greases, Calcium Sulfonates and Polyureas are increasing at the expense of other thickeners. Lithium Complex and Conventional Lithium greases are expected to continue to be market leaders. You should expect cost increases for Lithium and Lithium Complex greases due to increased demand for Lithium batteries as Electric Vehicles become more common.

It is important to know your product, so it is good to know some grease basics. Grease is defined as an oily semi-fluid to solid material. It is made with Oil (60-98%), Thickener (2-40%) and Additives (0-10%). Thickeners are typically formed by a chemical reaction, often involving an acid or acids and a base. The base chosen is typically where we get the thickener name, like Lithium, Calcium or Aluminum. Special manufacturing equipment is required, so there are fewer grease manufacturers than oil blenders. The process used is typically a batch process, though there are continuous process units in use.

A survey of the six highest volume thickeners (in alphabetical order) – Aluminum Complex, Anhydrous Calcium, Calcium Sulfonate, Lithium, Lithium Complex and Polyurea – was presented. For each thickener type, information was presented on common Applications, Advantages and Disadvantages. Additives used in greases are typically the same as those used in formulating industrial hydraulic and gear oils. In addition, greases may use solids that are not typically used in fluids. These include Molybdenum Disulfide (aka Moly), Graphite and PTFE (aka Teflon). These additives are used for specific applications and can be used because they are more easily suspended in grease than in fluids.

It is important when selling grease to know your audience and have a plan. It is also important to know your product line, your customer and your competitor. Finally, it is important to know your product and have a good basic understanding of greases.