

# Safety first



**W**hat does it take to be successful in the safety and personal protection equipment (PPE) categories? **OPI** speaks to Arnaud Bouchez, Lyreco's Group Category Director of Industrial Products to find out about the reseller's efforts in this area.

**OPI: What should resellers be looking for in terms of choosing a PPE vendor?**

**Arnaud Bouchez:** For such a strategic project, it is key to talk to credible players only. In other words, vendors that can support the initiative across all the necessary geographies, with the feet on the street and the required level of expertise. There is a serious nature attached to safety due to the liability dimension. In addition, the necessary investment in time and resources should not be underestimated.

**OPI: What is the best way to gain the knowledge required for PPE legislation and standards?**

**AB:** Aside from the available information and advice from industry associations, the partnership with vendors is key. But even this is not enough. It is an absolute must to invest in category and market experts to secure effective customer advice and long-term credibility.

**OPI: How should resellers approach existing clients in terms of adding PPE/safety products to their basket?**

**AB:** As soon as you know who your customers are, it is all about relevancy. You need to assess customers' needs and behaviours and then plan the relevant campaigns around those. Pragmatism is needed.

**OPI: What should resellers ask their wholesaler in terms of helping them become successful in the category?**

**AB:** Safety/PPE are not commodity categories. Having your wholesaler contribute to driving through category expertise, helping to select the right product, having samples available to test or use, etc would be of great value. And adding new products and promotions to keep up the good growth trend, of course.

**OPI: What are the biggest selling PPE items in the OP space?**

**AB:** This is difficult to answer from a general standpoint as this category is closely linked to

**Arnaud Bouchez**



the customer base structure. For example, if you're serving lots of oil and gas companies, the more chemical gloves or respiratory products you will sell.

**OPI: But is there a good 'starter' product for resellers maybe?**

**AB:** It's a tactical decision I guess. First aid kits may be an option, but if you want to be serious about the category, you need to address the big picture and talk about true PPE.

**OPI: Is it better to train existing sales people on PPE or hire specialists?**

**AB:** Both and it's important to take the time to execute and leverage it across the whole organisation.

**OPI: What are the latest trends in the PPE and safety categories?**

**AB:** We are closely very looking at the Internet of Things. Some of the connected/smart equipment makes sense in the context of increased focus on well-being and health at work. Manufacturers are also driving more value with new materials that are lighter and more technical.

In addition, the adjacency of workwear and fashion is increasing – it's all becoming more comfortable and more convenient.

**OPI: Are there any PPE product areas that OP resellers should avoid? If so, why?**

**AB:** It depends on the customer knowledge you have and the PPE maturity level within your business. Some safety-critical equipment areas such as powered air respirators or some gas detection products should obviously not be considered.

**OPI: Any additional dealer benefits to adding PPE to the portfolio?**

**AB:** It's a nice journey to embark on and it also helps to review the value chain within your own business.

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