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ASA Launches D.Next To Enhance Member Profitability By Leveraging Distributor Strengths With Technology

D.Next is an essential platform of capabilities ASA member companies rely on to enhance profits, meet customer changing needs, and transform their companies with technology.

[Chicago, IL, January 3, 2020] - Today the American Supply Association launched D.Next, a significant and innovative commitment to helping its members transform their businesses. D.Next is a platform of new capabilities, services and expertise ASA has developed to lead PHCP - PVF distributors in understanding, embracing, and implementing technology solutions in service of their customer's changing requirements. The focal point of the platform is the D.Next Innovation Lab insuring ASA members have access to technology that leverages their strengths as distributors. D.Next provides ASA members specific guidance to approach the uncertainties and complexity of a technologically enabled world with confidence.



Due to the nature of their business and the customers they serve, PHCP-PVF wholesalers and distributors have not had the need to transform their businesses as rapidly as other industries. They now find themselves however, in the early stages of a rapidly changing environment driven by accelerated advancements in technology. The opportunities and challenges within this business environment are immense. For those distributors who embrace how far and fast they need to transform, technology provides an engine of profitable growth. The challenge for many distributors is that technology is pervasive and complex, and thus little understood. Without a concerted effort to marshal resources across the industry to help distributors better understand and leverage technology, ASA members are exposed to outside disruptors and technology enabled competitors.

“While it’s hard to get our hands around exactly what technologies will best serve our businesses,” offers Bill Condron, president of The Granite Group, “we do know technology is our future. Taking it a step further, a group of ASA members recently asked ourselves, ‘If we were starting a distribution business today to serve our customers, what would it look like?’ The resounding response was that we would use technology to enhance our core competencies, deliver valued customer experiences, and solve customers’ changing business requirements. Our response led to the development of ASA’s D.Next which helps us figure out which technologies to deploy, we are positioning ourselves for sustained relevance and profitability.”

D.Next provides a comprehensive set of resources to insure ASA members invest in technologies that deliver solutions their customers will value. Wherever the member is along their technology journey, they will find solutions to develop the mindset, clarity, and strategies, to profitably transform their business. D.Next will be led by Ellen Weber, as ASA Vice President of Member Business Transformation. Ms. Weber most recently served as Project Manager for Amazon. “Working for a technology leader like Amazon where we deployed machine learning, IoT solutions, and other customer centric technologies,” offered Ms. Weber, “I see immense opportunities in the distribution industry to provide technology based solutions that today’s B2B customers desire.”

D.Next Innovation Lab

Central to D.Next is the new D.Next Innovation Lab that will open at Research Park in partnership with the University of Illinois. With the D.Next Innovation Lab, ASA is locating its technology incubator alongside some of the country’s most innovative businesses including Abbott Laboratories, Anheuser-Busch InBev, Brunswick, Caterpillar, Foxconn, John Deere, NVIDIA and Fortune 500 distributors Grainger and Graybar.

Research Park has a thriving innovative community that provides a significant bridge between research at the university and the commercialization of technology. For ASA members this means they will have unprecedented access to technologists, data scientists, engineers, and others focused on viable technology solutions for their businesses.

At this facility, ASA will collaborate with University of Illinois students and faculty to develop industry-leading digital capabilities that strengthen its member’s position in the supply chain. The ASA Innovation Lab will be a hub of industry, supplier, distributor, and technology company alliances that fund prioritized digital innovations that will be available exclusively to ASA members.

“We welcome ASA’s D.Next Innovation Lab to Research Park,” says Laura Frerichs, Research Park Director. “While large companies invest in their own innovation lab, it’s exciting to see that as a national trade association ASA is looking out for the small to mid-size independent distributor who traditionally does not have direct access to the type of technology and innovation that happens everyday on our campus.”

In addition to the Innovation Lab, D.Next platform of services also provides ASA members with needed resources to guide them along their technology transformation journey.

TechPath

ASA has partnered with thought leaders, technologists, researchers, and technology companies to provide detailed information distribution leaders need to assess and plan for diverse technologies. This information is available through TechPath, a new online reference center. Within TechPath, ASA members will access a library of technology roadmaps and other resources. These researched publications outline when, why, and what technology solutions are available to help members move forward while avoiding costly mistakes. TechPath continually vet's technologies and technology providers and publishes roadmaps as a "Consumer's Report" type recommendation for the technology distributors need to be considering.

D.Next Technology Summit

In coordination with ASA's annual NETWORK conference a new D.Next Technology Summit is being curated and produced. The summit will feature an array of new technological applications and business practices which are increasingly being incorporated into distributor technology strategies. Additionally ASA member technology transformation case studies will be featured. Each summit will include a series of new D.Next Innovation Awards that will recognize ASA members who successfully implement technology solutions that drive business results.

"With D.Next we are making the needed investments, and more importantly the commitment to our members to lead them along the technological transformation journey," says Mike Adelizzi, CEO of ASA. "Our aim is to help every ASA distributor make technology an engine of profitable growth."

Starting today ASA members can take a virtual reality tour of the D.Next Innovation Lab without leaving their business. During the tour Ms. Weber showcases the technology and data projects currently underway and introduces the lab interns and faculty sponsors. TechPath is also available today where downloadable research reports, technology assessment tools and roadmaps for ERP, CRM, E-Commerce, artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles, and IoT are available.

"D.Next is the very essence of what we need our national association focused on today," says Katie Poehling, COO of First Supply. "Technology is changing the competitive landscape, customer expectations, and business models at an unprecedented speed. Individually we struggle to keep up. We don't have the resources to stay on top of the change that technology is driving. But when we pull the industry together, we have the ability to embrace the technology and secure our relevance in the supply chain."

To learn more about preparing your business for transformation, visit the D.Next website.