How the Right Manufacturers' Representative Helps OEMs Simplify Component Sourcing and Sales Engineering

Back Bay Associates is a family-run manufacturers' rep agency serving OEMs since 1983. We connect HVAC and food service OEMs with trusted component suppliers, managing samples, specs, and communication from print to production at no added cost.

Bay Village, Ohio Nov 24, 2026 (Issuewire.com) - In the most practical scenarios, component sourcing rarely fails all at once. A coil supplier's lead times stretch. Purchasing asks for a second source before the next price increase hits. Then an engineer spends a week chasing answers from a plant that has stopped responding. For OEMs, these problems pull teams away from building equipment.

Back Bay Associates, a family-run manufacturers' representative serving OEMs since 1983, believes the right representative can take most of that burden off the OEM.

What a Manufacturers' Representative Does

A manufacturers' representative works as outsourced sales engineering for the component makers it represents. The OEM shares its print and requirements, and the representative matches them to a manufacturer that builds the part well and stays on the account through sampling, approval, and production.

"Any OEM can find a coil shop on its own," said Jeff Ketterer, CEO and Principal of Back Bay Associates. "What takes years to learn is which plants hold tolerance when volume doubles, and which ones pick up the phone when a line is down. That knowledge is what a good manufacturers' representative agency brings to the table."

Outsourced Sales Engineering That Keeps Projects Moving

Many OEMs in the business have lean purchasing and engineering teams. Outsourced sales engineering gives them a technical partner who understands both sides of the transaction. Back Bay Associates coordinates the samples, manages specifications, and also keeps technical questions moving between OEM engineers and the manufacturer until the part is approved.

After the first purchase order, this relationship continues. If a delivery slips or a spec changes, the OEM contacts Back Bay, and Back Bay takes it up with the plant. Some customers prefer to work directly with the plant on engineering, design, and delivery issues. In such cases, Back Bay stays copied on the exchange and monitors overall progress.

One Contact for Multiple Components

A single piece of HVACR equipment often needs a coil, a motor, a fan, and controls. At Back Bay, several manufacturers are represented with complementary product lines, so one conversation can cover all of them. Its principal supply:

- Heat-transfer air coils, including commercial HVAC coils
- Plastic injection moldings
- Fractional-horsepower and ECM motors and blower assemblies
- Electrical components, including wire harnesses, relays, and contactors

- Fan blades and blower wheels
- Fabricated tubing and custom tube bending

Fewer vendors mean fewer relationships to manage, and the OEM works with a representative who understands how those components interact inside the unit. For example, when an OEM moves a platform to EC motors, bringing in the manufacturer's representative early helps. The motor choice affects controls and wiring, and those questions are far easier to settle before the design freezes.

Why It Matters for HVAC and Food Service OEMs

For an **HVAC manufacturer's representative**, application knowledge matters as much as supplier knowledge. HVACR components must perform through heat, cold, humidity, and years of on-off cycling. In food service equipment, parts run all day in demanding commercial kitchens, so durability often decides what gets specified. As a reliable **manufacturer's representative agency** with decades of experience, Back Bay focuses on these two verticals and also works with OEMs in tier two automotive, off-highway, and marine markets.

Domestic and Global Sourcing Options

Some programs may require a lower landed cost than a domestic plant can offer, or more capacity than one supplier can provide. For such projects, Back Bay maintains established relationships with manufacturers in lowest-cost-country markets. The OEMs still work with Back Bay, which manages specifications, samples, and communication with the overseas manufacturer, so engineers don't have to chase answers across time zones.

No Added Fee for the OEM

Manufacturers that Back Bay represents compensate the agency, so working with an OEMmanufacturer's representative doesn't add a separate fee to the OEM's purchase. For component makers, the model offers an efficient way to reach OEM customers and build long-term accounts.

Local Coverage, Long Relationships

Back Bay's core territory includes Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky. Most customers are within driving distance, allowing the team to visit plants with ease, review applications, and resolve issues quickly. Some principal relationships extend beyond these states and are handled account by account.

Founded by William R. Ketterer, the company is still run by the Ketterer family, and many of its principal relationships have lasted decades. "Our standard is simple," Ketterer said. "Listen closely, and do the right thing for the customer and for the manufacturer."

Get Started

If you have a part that needs a better source, send Back Bay Associates your print today. Include the drawing, material specifications, estimated annual usage, and timeline, plus a target price if you have one. The team will review it and let you know quickly whether one of its principals can help. Visit backbayassoc.com to submit your print, call or text 440.728.0064, or email info@backbayassoc.com. Drawings stay confidential.

About Back Bay Associates

Back Bay Associates, Inc. is a manufacturers' representative for OEMs in HVACR, food service equipment, and related markets. Based in Bay Village, Ohio, the family-owned company has matched OEMs with trusted component manufacturers since 1983. Learn more at backbayassoc.com.

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