



Suncoast Sails

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What Makes A Good Salesman

The turf products salesman is an essential part of the turfgrass industry. This person should do much more than just sell. A good salesman can be worth their weight in gold to a turf manager. But, what is a good salesman?

A good salesman knows his product line. I have had chemical salesmen call on me who had no idea what they were selling. Oh, they knew it was good for turf and that it would make the grass greener but had no idea what the material was. I've seen equipment company sales personnel who were unable to make a simple adjustment on a machine that was being demonstrated. A sales representative should also be able to intelligently discuss his products. He should take the time to gather information from a variety of sources, I.E. their company, published literature, turf managers, etc. this information should be used to gain the confidence of a turf manager not to mislead him.

A good salesman has literature, labels, etc. available for the products he offers. If the information is mailed, it must be done within a reasonable amount of time. It also helps to provide the names of other turf managers in the area who have had experience with the product being sold. Written testimonials are of little value since they can sometimes be deceptive. It's a bad practice for a salesman to call a person whom the customer does not know and ask them for a testimonial. This guy could be some jackleg from who knows where who is in with the salesman trying to make a buck. The customer should be given some names of turf managers who he knows so he can call them at his leisure.

A good salesman should not use high pressure tactics to make a sale. This turns many customers off fast. A customer who buys something because of a pushy salesman, may end up not being satisfied with the product. When this happens, repeat business is not very likely. Customers should not be pestered by a salesman. Making routine calls is ok but the welcome mat can get worn out if the salesman visits too often and/or takes up too much of the customers time. A salesman has no grounds to get out of shape if a customer does not have time to see him. Calling ahead for an appointment can avoid any problems here. If the appointment cannot be made, a phone call is appropriate.

A good salesman will go an extra step to help a customer. When I need a product it is very comforting to know that my salesman will stay on top of it until it is in my hot little hands. If it's an emergency he will do everything in his power to expedite delivery. I've had salesmen who have taken a badly needed part off a new machine in their warehouse and delivered it to my shop. Their help in a crisis is almost always remembered when machine ordering time comes rolling around.

A good salesman does not hold a grudge when he has lost a sale to a competitor. Instead, he should work harder to make the next sale. This is very important because it can affect future dealings. A salesman who criticizes a customer for not seeing his way is just asking for trouble when the time comes for future negotiations.

A good salesman will not try to buy your business. A person who opens their trunk full of merchandise and says that if you buy a 30 gallon drum you get a radio or watch and for a 50 gal. purchase you get a television or microwave oven is not very ethical. I've heard superintendents at new jobs talk about seeing drums of worthless chemicals in storage knowing that kickbacks were taken. This is a degradation to our industry's reputation. Superintendents who participate in these shady deals usually don't keep their jobs very long.

A good salesman will back his products. After the machine is sold the salesman's work has only just begun. He should review the operating procedures with the superintendents and/or operator when the machine is used for the first time. The machine should be thoroughly checked for proper adjustments, the operator should be checked for proper operation, and any very important or unusual maintenance requirements should be reviewed with the mechanic. This way many minor but potentially major problems can be nipped in the bud. After the machine has been in use for a short period of time, the salesman should return to make sure everything is kosher. The correction of any problem with the machine should be monitored.

Yes, a good salesman is a very important part of the turfgrass industry. The service he provides is another tool the turf manager uses to produce the end product... fine turf. We must remember that this service does not come cheap. When making a purchase the turf manager should consider service from the salesman as well as the company. Good service is worth a little extra money, don't overlook it!