

'Old fashioned' selling still in style



by LARRY IORII

Your current customers—and potential customers—want responsible companies that are attentive to their needs.

Most good clients want dependability and technical knowledge when they hire a service company. So how does this relate to “old fashioned selling?”

It is simple and amazing that most established companies fail when it comes to the fundamentals of sound selling.

Company portfolio

This sales tool should contain a cover letter from your company that explains your mission statement and accomplishments. List your residential and commercial accounts. It is wise to show a spread of various geographic areas, plus all levels of socioeconomic categories. If you list only the high-end accounts and the exclusive neighborhoods, potential customers may feel intimidated.

Your lower income accounts pay first, while the wealthy pay later in an effort to

earn interest on their accounts payables as long as possible.

Your portfolio should contain pertinent information, such as:

- pesticide license number
- insurance company, and name of sales agent
- business license number.

The information makes the sales prospect feel very secure in today's business climate of broken promises and irresponsible businesses.

Furthermore, it usually gives the edge over a competitive bid, or justifies why you may be 10 or 15 percent higher. It shows that you are being a professional in your presentation.

Response time, attitude

The number one complaint from new sales calls is the lax attitude of returning phone calls. Make it a policy to state when your calls will be returned.

What is your attitude and response time to a complaint? Always hear them out and listen carefully. Do not confront

Show prospective clients examples of your work, and invite them to visit the property.

the client. Most of the time, a cool head will defuse the situation and make an angry customer a happy one.

Handle problems quickly. It is much easier to retain a good account than to find a new one.

Do you write notes to customers? Do you know what makes a customer smile? This informal touch creates a bond with the customer. We should never discount the human element as part of the intangible rewards of business.

When was the last time you or an employee called or stopped by a client's home to see how they liked your work? Sincerity, enthusiasm and dedication are qualities not readily found in today's service businesses.

No charge service

Once in a while, it is good to provide a minimal service at no charge to the customer. Examples would be removing a small tree limb that is laying on the lawn from a storm, or removing deadwood out of a shrub next to the entranceway.

For a few minutes of work, a thoughtful deed goes a long way to furthering a business relationship.

This does not mean you regularly provide services at no charge beyond the contract. However, it is smart to make customers feel that we are not trying to squeeze every dollar out of their pocket or budget.

If a counterman tosses you a spool of line trimmer string and says, “It's on the house,” how would you feel? Case in point. □

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