

MAINTENANCE

Selling on the frontline

Encouraging employees in the field to sell add-ons can improve net profit. Here's how to get started.

By MARISA PALMIERI

Landscape companies can improve their sales and profitability by empowering frontline employees like foremen and project managers to sell, according to consultant Jeffrey Scott.

"It's very effective for raising overall net profit by selling high-margin, add-on sales," he says.

He outlined what it takes to get frontline employees to close deals during the Jeffrey Scott Sales Summit, a three-part webinar series held earlier this year in partnership with *Landscape Management*.

The frontline employee's sales role includes spotting and preventing problems, planting seeds and reporting needs, Scott says. Encouraging employees to sell requires training, incentives and collaboration.

Basic training for frontline employees should cover things as simple as making eye contact and smiling, wearing a clean uniform, asking questions and practicing active listening. Also, ensure employees know what services your company's already supposed to be providing the client.

"Don't make suggestions for things you're already doing or supposed to be doing and haven't done yet," Scott says.

Incentives are important to motivate staff who aren't accustomed to selling. If selling isn't a core part of an employee's job, incentives typically have to be enough "to make it fun," Scott says. Consider incentivizing team members for leads, bringing in new clients and making enhancement sales.

For starters, introduce the new frontline sales program to the team and explain the incentive. Consider giving your new "salespeople" business cards if they don't already have them, which adds some weight and importance to their role. Provide them with forms to return to the office for leads or sales made. Remember to celebrate successes, and not just with money, Scott says.

"Making it important is what will make it happen," he says. "You can't just throw it out like a boomerang and expect it'll come back."

Finally, good internal communication among departments is important for collaboration. "If not, you'll find you may step on each other's toes and cause more problems," Scott says.

