



PROFITING FROM DESIGN

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Everybody gets the same leads

Q I was at your workshop last week at the Green Expo in Atlantic City, N.J. (It was great, by the way). Can you explain what you mean when you say, “Everybody gets the same leads.”? One thing’s for sure, I definitely don’t get the same calls as some of the bigger companies.

—Helen Somerset, Pinelands Landscape and Construction, Voorhees, N.J.

A Anybody who’s listened to one of my webinars or attended a workshop or presentation knows I like to discuss two very important points. One point is based on something I read in the newspaper: “When surveyed after project completion, many homeowners say they would have spent more if their contractors had shown them more options.” The other point I discuss is everybody gets the same leads, regardless of company size, location or years in business.

Let’s take a look at this point so I can help you understand why it’s so important to you and your business, and why I always touch on it in my presentations.

Your question refers to my presentation slide that states, “Everybody gets the same leads. It’s what you do with those leads that determines whether you will get some work, no work or a significant design/build installation project.”

Every company gets good leads (new potential clients) and bad leads (people who are just going to waste your time). You may not think that it’s true, and nobody may tell you that it’s true, but I can tell you from experience that it’s true.

The big question is, why should it matter to you?

I’ll tell you why. It takes away the argument that you aren’t selling work because your company doesn’t get good leads. Your company does get good leads, just like bigger companies do. The only difference is the big companies know how to

convert those leads into sales—and you don’t.

Both you and your name brand competitors get calls that have little to no hope of being a viable project, but your competitors know how to “successfully eliminate” them on the initial phone call, while you unwittingly chase those clients around for weeks—spending 10 to 15 hours on their projects before you get the eventual “thanks, but no thanks” message on your voice mail.

When I worked as a freelance designer for many companies I would literally shake my head as I watched inexperienced landscape contractors ruin the presentation and the sale that I just teed up for them. Whether they frustrated the client with a poorly written or confusing contract or made one of a dozen other common mistakes, the results were the same: a perfectly good lead that had been converted into a permanent “no sale.”

After seeing so many ruined presentations, I realized what the potential pitfalls were and developed the concept that everyone gets the same leads but not everyone understands how to manage them properly. It wasn’t until I made a series of presentations to clients on behalf of the various contractors that I finally realized that lack of experience and proper systems take a perfectly good customer and wreck them for life.

Eventually I gave these contractors two options—either present the plan and proposal yourself or let me do it. The smarter ones got the hint when I came back with a signed contract and hefty deposit. The not-so-smart ones kept challenging the system and continued to blame the quality of their leads for their lack of sales and success.

So, Helen, you really are getting the same leads as some of the big boys, you’re just struggling with them.

To submit a question for Profiting From Design, please contact Shilan at jshilan@gmail.com.