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'THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY'

HOW TO GENERATE LEADS WITHOUT RANDOM DOOR KNOCKING

By Carl Davidson

We really have to change our image as salespeople who slowly drag ourselves along dusty roads, knocking on doors and facing rejection and humiliation from an angry public. Sure, you may do that if you are desperate but it should be a last resort. This image keeps many salespeople from doing any prospecting and it hurts dealers who want to recruit. After all, who wants to join the ranks of dusty predators who pounce on unsuspecting homeowners.

There are many ways to get all the leads you need without random door knocking. In October, *Water Quality Products* magazine sponsored a seminar we produced in Las Vegas Nev. At the seminar, we discussed many ways to prospect. As usual, I learned as much from the audience as they learned from me. Here are some of "the good, the bad and the ugly" ways we discussed for generating leads.

Set a Daily Time

The first point we discussed was the importance of setting a specific time for prospecting. If you wait until you have nothing else to do, you could wait forever to prospect. We thought it was a good idea to send out 30 letters before you go to work as well as set aside sufficient time to generate leads on a regular basis.

Use Your Head, Not Your Feet

We also discussed several effective methods for prospecting. For example, instead of begging customers for names of friends or neighbors, we agreed it is better to use a reverse directory or CD from companies like infoUSA, Omaha, Nebr. (www.infousa.com). These CDs are inexpensive and allow you with the click of a mouse to find and contact (by mail or by phone) 10, 15, 20 or any number of the nearest neighbors to people you have previously sold your equipment. This is a much more

appealing way to get the names of your customers' neighbors.

When is Door-to-Door Right?

We agreed it is a good idea to call on four or five neighbors when you are going to an appointment and then again on the day of the installation. Many who attended the seminar told me this method alone has doubled their sales. The conclusion was, it is bad and ugly to call on random doors but not on doors of neighbors at appointments or installations. Making this mandatory will have a serious effect on your sales.

Great Ideas

A seminar attendee explained that he has joined the local board of realtors and the local home builders association. He has negotiated a deal with local realtors where the realtors would give new home owners a thank you gift—a water filtration system supplied at no charge. Naturally, the dealer would go by later to check the water and do a full demo. The attendee said he has been very successful in upgrading homeowners to RO systems and other equipment. He feels the systems he gives away are more than paid for by the ease of getting appointments and the realtors-endorsements. This is indeed a great way to get leads without going down the dusty road. It is a win/win situation. The realtor provides a great benefit to new homeowners, the water company gets a lead and the homeowner receives better water.

Another seminar attendee told us about how he has become "the water guy" for local health insurance companies. He attends lectures the HMO gives to subscribers about nutrition, quitting smoking, etc. He talks about the importance of water. At the end, he says, "I am so concerned about your water, I'll give you a free filtra-

tion system just for allowing me to test your water." He takes names and sets appointments. This is also a very successful program.

These and many other ideas are innovative and good ways to get leads. Some managers are continuing to look for "hard headed salespeople" who are willing to go door-to-door every day. Others are developing successful plans that integrate door-knocking on neighbors at key times with other ways of growing sales.

Be honest, would you go door-to-door every day? Do you do it now? I am certain there are very few managers and owners out there who would consider doing two demos per day by straight door knocking. No wonder it is tough to recruit high quality people for that kind of job!

There are many exciting ways to generate leads. Dealers and managers who help invent and use exciting and profitable plans that appeal to the imagination of their sales staff will be able to recruit a better team and make them more successful.

Don't stick to the same prospecting your grandfather used. We have helped many of our clients to custom-design affordable prospecting programs for their market. Think and ask your staff for suggestions. Try new things and see what works. Getting away from the door-to-door image will help you recruit better sales staff and help you retain good salespeople for a long and productive career. **WQP**

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