

Back to Basics



Pouring money down the drain, it certainly seems so to many companies who are faced with ineffective sales and marketing programs. Marketing is demanding. It requires clear business objectives, and yes, execution. Unfortunately, even then your efforts may not deliver the desired results.

It would be great if your customers could recognize the value of a RO system or softener instantly without focusing on the price. But due to pressure from the big boxes, there is always a dealer willing to cut the price.

It is not news that unlike buying a hammer, purchasing water treatment equipment requires a qualified water specialist who can answer the customers' questions and find the right solutions for their needs. That's something the big box stores don't offer.

You on the other hand, can offer a lot more. The question is, does your customer know and see the value of your products and services? An effective sales and marketing program can help you achieve that.

In a recent *Water Quality Products* Editorial Review Survey conducted by ABR Research, Inc., Commack, N.Y., a full-service market and media research company, we asked *WQP* readers what are some major issues facing their company today? More than half of you (54.1%) identified sales and marketing as a top issue for your company. However, many businesses choose to cut marketing programs at the first sign of budget trouble on the horizon. It seems to be the obvious choice—sales and marketing are usually viewed as the non-revenue generating areas of the business.

While everything is going well, companies are generally less likely to track the non-performing sides of their marketing programs. This is common and it occurs mainly because the businesses can afford it. This attitude changes quickly as soon as recession hits.

While experts agree that tough times require a close re-evaluation of expenses associated with marketing, it is important not to disqualify programs that create new leads and continue to generate sales.

If customers aren't flocking to your doorstep, you need to bring them in. It's easier said than done, but sales and marketing efforts are not only expressed through various forms of direct mail, PR campaigns and cutting prices. Quality customer service is a big part of what your business can and should offer. For example, I would like to share a brief story that addresses voice mail.

I recently received a phone call from a reader who was looking for specific product information. I did the best I could to point him in the right direction, but I couldn't help but wonder why he was calling me instead of the company. The answer was pretty surprising: "I can't take dealing with voice mail messages anymore," the caller said.

It is truly amazing how many of us personally and professionally have begun "hiding" behind our voice mails. In the meantime there is a customer on the other end of the line in need of our service.

So yes, it is not easy to identify and implement an effective sales and marketing program, but following your basic business sense such as good customer service doesn't cost your budget a penny.

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