

Are You Getting Your Market Share?

By Andrew Zeigler

Reinventing your sales plan to build business

Safe drinking water is critical to modern life. It is a prerequisite for all human activity—physical, economic and cultural.

The U.S. has one of the safest water supplies in the world and has a long history of implementing programs to provide clean and safe water. The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) and Clean Water Act (CWA) are examples of a work in progress to ensure U.S. water supplies remain the safest in the world.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently published these statistics regarding drinking water in the U.S.:

- There are 160,000 public water systems (PWS) in the U.S.;
- 84% of the total U.S. population is serviced by PWSs;
- PWSs produce 51 billion gal of water per day (67% residential, 33% nonresidential);
- PWSs obtain 63% of source water from surface sources; and
- There are 2.3 million miles of distribution system pipes in the U.S.

The DHS classifies these PWSs as critical assets requiring protection against terrorist acts and have developed a Water Sector Specific Plan to protect these assets. You can help protect your customers from the known and unknown issues facing their drinking water supply with your own drinking water sales plan.

As a water treatment professional, customers rely on your expertise to

address their water problems. The vast majority of dealerships rely on the core products—whole-house water softening equipment—as their primary revenue source.

Point-of-use (POU) drinking water systems can also be a source of significant revenue. It has the capability of producing reoccurring income for years to come. With the right sales model, POU's can replace the rental income many dealers have seen erode over the past years.

One only needs to look to the appliance industry to see the sales model that can be readily implemented at your dealership. In the last five years, nearly every refrigerator with ice or water through the door has a water filter installed at the factory. This has created a large cash flow from replacement cartridge sales to the manufacturer's bottom line.

This decision for the inclusion of water filters was made by management and not the sales force. Are you ready to make a similar decision for your dealership?

Implementing a Sales Program

First, offer your customers a system approach to water treatment for their home. Include a drinking system as an integral part of your water quality proposal—one that is conveniently installed to service

not only their refrigerator but all of their water using appliances and fixtures used for drinking, cooking and food preparation.

Second, select a drinking water system that can be included with each proposal. Offer options based on your customer's water quality and interest levels. For example, include a water filter that has superior performance and is more convenient than what is currently in use in their refrigerator, and offer reverse osmosis as an upgrade.

Third, select your water filter and optional drinking water carefully. Third-party certified systems are easier to sell and give the customer the assurance they are getting the performance they want.

Fourth, stop using a TDS meter as the only measurement of water quality. With 84% of the population serviced by public water supplies, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), disinfection byproducts, trihalomethanes, volatile organic chemicals, MTBE, chlorine, chloramines, cysts and lead are the primary contaminants in drinking water, and many of these do not register on a TDS meter. The EPA also states that 63% of the public water supplies in the U.S. are from surface water supplies, which tend to have low TDS.

Sales Ratios

In my travels, I make sales calls on a wide variety of water treatment professionals. I am always a bit surprised when they share their drinking water system sales to new customers that purchase a water softener ratio. Some do a great job and seem to be satisfied to reach a +50% ratio; however, most fall into the 10% to 20% range. Examine your ratio of drinking water systems to water softeners for new customers.



Financial Impact

What does it mean to your bottom-line income when you leave at least half (more often 80%), of your water softener customers without a drinking water system? Not only have you lost income but you may very well have influenced or educated these customers to think about their tap water. They may find a system at a retail store or from a competitor. This is after you have invested heavily to create a prospect, devoting your time and money to making a professional presentation. Take these customers off of the market with your sales plan.

Increase your bottom line from your initial sales, and more importantly, create an income stream from the sales of replacement cartridges for years to come. I invite all of you to review your sales plan and improve these ratios, your bottom line as well as your customer satisfaction levels.

Closing Thoughts

Review your current sales plan and consider making a top-down management decision to leave no customer without improved water for cooking and drinking. For new customers, include a drinking water filter as a standard part of every proposal. For existing customers without a drinking water system, utilize your service department to offer customers a drinking water system while they are at the home.

Are you allowing the TDS meter to cost you your fair share of this growing market? Many dealers are. Kick the TDS habit and increase your drinking water system sales. *wqp*

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