

A close-up photograph of a person's hand, adorned with a silver bracelet, tracing a path in a vibrant green lawn. The path is a series of small, dark green tufts of grass, forming a curved line that recedes into the distance. The lighting is bright, casting a long, dark shadow of the hand and the path onto the grass.

# Tracing a New Path in 'Green'

By Chris Wilker

*If you've been in the water treatment industry for any length of time, you are most likely familiar with at least one version of the in-home demonstration (the "demo"). A well-trained salesperson runs a series of tests on the customer's raw, untreated water and performs those same tests on the treated water produced by a miniature version of the water treatment product being sold.*

*Implementing green technology options as part of an effective sales arsenal*

The tests and demonstrations are strong visual examples of how the water treatment products are changing the water, and do a great job of educating the customer.

Industry studies show the average close rate of this in-home sales technique is one out of three. Personal experience working with many sales organizations across the country shows only the top-performing salespeople are closing at this rate. When assessed honestly, most salespeople are closing at one out of four or less.

So, here's the question: What did the consumers who did not buy end up doing? Sure, some of them went to retail and purchased an inexpensive

cash-and-carry unit and we will get those consumers back in a few years. Some bought a softener from a competitive professional brand. Some may have called their brother-in-law, the plumber, and had him install a water softener. But what about the consumers who did not buy at all?

## Consumer Behavior

Have you ever really thought about that consumer behavior? They can sit through a very powerful demo, learn all about their water problems, and end up doing nothing. It is like going to the doctor for a sore throat, finding out you have throat cancer, and doing nothing.

Maybe those consumers do nothing because they do not know what to do. Maybe they sat through the demo, learned about their water, but were uncomfortable with the lack of choices offered at the end of the demo. Sure, most salespeople offer choices of water softeners, sometimes a "drop" model at a lower price to save the deal. But most demos do not offer a real choice of technologies, and many sales are lost because of this.

This group of lost sales represents incremental sales for most dealerships. Our early-in-market studies confirm these lost consumers will buy more often when offered a real choice of technologies.

I am talking about offering a "green" choice. A salt-free, chemical-free choice. In this age of ever-increasing environmental awareness, the number of consumers keenly aware of how their individual actions affect the earth is growing by leaps and bounds. These are the consumers who will purchase an in-home composter as a green method to dispose of their coffee grounds and banana

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peels. These consumers pay 20% more for the right to drive a hybrid car and are happy to do so. These consumers carry their groceries home in reusable bags. These consumers are well aware of their carbon footprint, and are changing their behavior to lower it; and they exist everywhere. Yes, California and the entire West Coast of the U.S. have a reputation for being green, but environmentally conscious consumers can be found throughout the entire country.

And many of these consumers just cannot mentally connect with those 40-lb bags of softener salt, so they do not buy at all.

### Determine Consumers' Green Quotient

But what if the salesperson were to offer, at the very beginning of the demo, a true choice of technologies? What if, in the first three to four minutes, and through a series of simple questions, the salesperson could determine if this consumer is a hybrid-driving, home-composting, low-carbon-footprint consumer? The time it takes to determine the consumer's green quotient can lead to a new path for additional equipment sales.

If the consumer's green quotient is low, the salesperson follows the traditional demo path; however, if the consumer's green quotient is high, the salesperson takes the consumer down the green technology demo path. Either way, the demo ends with the close. It ends with a sale that may not have happened without offering a green choice of technologies.

### Understanding Green Technologies

So what are these new green technology choices? The answer to this question is evolving as several manufacturers now are offering salt-free technologies. Many of these new technologies are based on anti-scale or scale reduction technology. Some manufacturers offer electronic devices; others offer other physical treatment devices; and some offer a media-based technology to

prevent scale from forming on the plumbing and water-using appliances. Many of these salt-free technologies also offer low to no wastewater, and some of the high-end technologies package anti-scale with other technologies, such as activated carbon, to increase the benefits to the consumer.

As with all technologies, it is important to shop the manufacturers not only for the product, warranty, quality and service, but to verify the removal claims of the technology. Check for third-party certifications, manufacturers' test data and other pertinent information to help make that new technology buying decision. Most of the anti-scale or scale reduction technologies currently offered do not soften the water. This point is very important to understand and to communicate when taking the consumer down the green technology demo path.

### Improve Closing Rates

So, how can your dealership improve on the one-out-of-three close rate? Begin by supplementing your current product offering of softeners, ROs and problem water equipment, by adding a green technology option. Then, modify your demo to ensure the salesperson can determine the customer's green quotient and take the right path. *wqp*

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