

# What Women Want



By Jennifer Smith

## Tips for interacting with your female customers

It's been said that men and women are from different planets. We do not always see eye to eye, and sometimes we do not realize how a member of the opposite sex is feeling. This not only affects our personal lives, but our professional lives as well. In some cases, there are little things that can cost big sales. Over the course of this three-part series, I will explain how to prepare for an appointment, what to do (and not do) during your appointment, and most importantly, what to do after that "big date."

I started out in the water industry almost 10 years ago as a territory manager in a rural area in Michigan. I have carried a test kit into residences ranging from a mobile home on 100 acres of farmland to multi-million-dollar homes. As the general manager of Moti-Vitality LLC, I have hired and trained sales professionals across the nation, allowing me to be a "fly on the wall" during many sales calls. I have been a consumer of home improvement products and services as recently as last week. But a large part of my research was done on Facebook—I asked many of my female friends what they like and dislike about in-home salespeople, and received some interesting feedback. The following tips are based on this feedback, as well as my experience in the field.

### Tip #1: A woman's status does not limit her responsibilities.

One of the most common complaints women share is being asked the question, "Will your husband be home?" Women may be single, married but working opposite shifts, divorced, or, let's face it—it's the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and some of your customers may be wife-and-wife teams rather than husband-and-wife teams. Some women are proud of their independence, while others just prefer not to discuss relationship status. One Facebook friend wrote: "We want to be talked to like we have common sense, not like we are women who don't understand."

Years ago, I had three window

companies tell me that state law required that both husband and wife be present when a company representative was sent out. Working opposing shifts with four young children at home, this was not possible for my family. My husband and I discussed what we wanted prior to calling these companies; we knew our price range, and I had full authority to sign the paperwork—and the check.

As a matter of fact, women make or influence 85% of all purchasing decisions and purchase more than 50% of traditional "male" products, including automobiles, home improvement products and electronics. Of course, I chose the window company that was willing to come to my home and present its product to me—without my husband present.

When setting an appointment, instead of asking for the husband's name, ask, "Will there be any other decision-makers joining us?" or "How many people live in the home?" This gives the opportunity for a woman to say, "My husband will be working," or "Just myself and my three children." If she gives the first answer, then I suggest gently responding, "I am available to swing by in the evening or Saturday if that works for the two of you. If you are anything like my spouse and I, we have different questions." Let her tell you what is best for their schedule, and gladly accept.

### Tip #2: Get in touch with your feminine side.

Are you familiar with Malibu Treatments? If not, I challenge you to stop by a beauty salon in your area to find out. Ask the hairdressers and nail technicians about the challenges they face with customers who bathe in hard water. I had a hairdresser complain she had a customer who was "bad advertising." Within two weeks of applying blonde highlights, the client became a dull strawberry blonde. This client's friend assumed it was the result of a bad product being used at the salon, when in reality it was the 2 ppm of iron and 32 gpg of hardness in her water.

Good health is a top priority for women. Print out articles that discuss the benefits of water for healthy weight, skin and joints. Keep a few water recipes handy—mixing fresh lemon or raspberries with water can boost energy and make drinking water more appealing.

We all like to save money, and soft water not only reduces the amount of shampoo and lotion we use, but also the amount of cleaning products. Locate a dishwasher owner's manual. You will find a hardness chart that not only advises using more than four times as much detergent for hardness levels of more than 12 gpg, but also recommends installing a water softener.

We are fortunate to have a world of knowledge at our fingertips. I recommend signing up for Google Alerts. You can type in keywords like "water" and the area in which you live. You will receive e-mails with news stories about what is happening with water in your area. If a customer hears about a water issue, she will have questions. She will look to you, the water expert, for answers.

### Tip #3: Get to know the girl next door.

If you have access to a current customer database, take full advantage of it. If you have an appointment with Sherri on Miller Street, find a current customer close by. Call and ask to swing by while you are in the neighborhood (prior to your appointment with Sherri) to make sure all equipment is working properly, free of charge. This will offer "wow" service to your existing customer, and the opportunity to ask for a reference to give to Sherri. Let's face it—women talk. If you treat her like she is "the one and only," she will tell everybody. *wqp*

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