

FOCUS on the Follow-Up

The positives of scheduling a follow-up visit with every customer

By Kelly R. Thompson

Follow-ups: In my experience, hardly anyone does them—but that is precisely one of the biggest reasons that you should be doing them. No one else is, and your customers will be blown away.

I personally believe that the follow-up should be considered the most important part of the sales process. You know you are better than your competition—but you need to demonstrate that to your customers. Maybe follow-ups are something you have heard that you should be doing, but you do not know how.

Follow-Up Basics

Put simply, a follow-up is an in-person visit within two weeks (and definitely not more than 30 days) after an install. Many companies make follow-up phone calls, but if you want to be better than average, a phone call is not enough—you have to go back to the house.

At this point, you may be thinking of reasons why you cannot do a follow-up for every customer, but it is important to make sure those reasons are not actually excuses. Making your company above average is not easy. That is why your competition is not doing those extra things—but it is also the reason why you should be.

The biggest excuse that I hear for not doing follow-ups is that it is tough to get them scheduled with the customer. Salespeople have told me that they tried to call the customer, but he or she would not return their calls and they could not get them to schedule the follow-up. I can honestly say that out of the hundreds of customers I had



when I was a straight commissioned water treatment sales professional, there were maybe five customers with whom I was not able to schedule a follow-up. I made a point of scheduling them at the same time I scheduled the install. I would say something like:

“Mr. Smith, I truly appreciate the opportunity to serve you and your family. There are two dates we need to look at. First, when would you like us to install the

equipment? Second, I'd like to schedule a time a week or so after that to swing back and check the system to make sure it is doing everything I promised you it would do. I will check to make sure the installation is done to our high standards and answer any questions you might have. I also will show you how to set the time and manually regenerate the equipment, as well as how to change any filters."

Finding a Way

It is true that almost all of my sales were self-generated and I worked in a small, protected territory. I recognize that some salespeople must deal with larger territories in which customers might be hours apart from one another. I will admit that in those types of situations, doing follow-ups can be more challenging. Because of my protected territory and the way I organized my calendar, I knew where I was going to be every day of the week, even months into the future. Having more control over my schedule and being able to stay within my small territory as much as possible contributed to being able to do follow-ups.

That said, I still think that a company is missing the boat if it does not find a way to do a follow-up on every sale made, whether it be by the owner, service department or sales department. I believe that if you sit down and make a list of the pros and cons of implementing a follow-up policy, you will find that the positives far outnumber the negatives. Besides creating a "wow" impression of service on your customer, you also will be able to catch any problems before your customer does, which means a happy customer now instead of an angry customer later. You will be able to check drain lines and possible leaks before they cost you and your insurance company thousands of dollars. You will have a better opportunity for referrals, as well as the opportunity to present additional equipment that may or may not have been discussed at the time of the sale.

I can think of many proven reasons for doing follow-ups and few for not doing them. In my experience, they help produce more sales and happier customers.

When I was in sales, I did follow-ups for all of these reasons and more. As sales manager, I believed so strongly in the policy that I began incentivizing our sales team to do follow-ups by

holding back 2% of the commission until the follow-up was completed. I have since met one dealership owner that does not pay any commission until the follow-up is completed.

Regardless of how you do it, I strongly recommend doing follow-ups for every customer, period.

My next article, in the June issue of *WQP*, will detail the process of completing a follow-up. **WQP**

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