

Repeat Your Way to More Cleaning Contracts

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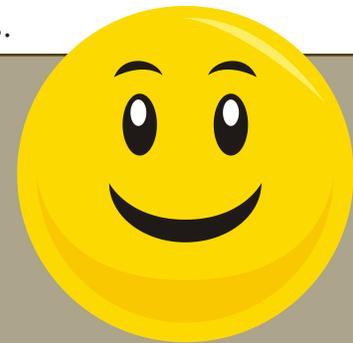
How many times have you heard the old saw, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again?” Usually, when a saying becomes a cliché, we find there is some truth to its message. Let’s test the adage with another question. How many times have you or your sales people followed this advice to rope in new clientele? If the answer is less than always, your cleaning company is losing valuable business!

In spite of our best intentions, when it comes to selling, we as an industry simply do not maintain enough contact with prospective buyers to lead them into becoming customers. In fact, many of us cleaning professionals have no idea why such regular contact should be a part

of our business-building program. Another old saying happens to explain this lack of contact: “Out of sight, out of mind.” Therefore, it is paramount that we continually keep our information in front of those who would hire our cleaning services.

Recently, and for the umpteenth time, I was asked by a local contractor for tips on how he could get more jobs. Remember, my line of work is to sell professional cleaning supplies to those folks that do the actual cleaning. It is in my best interest to help my customers garner more business for themselves so they can purchase more from me. I gave him some ideas.

Happy Representation Makes for More Business



How many times have sour corporate representatives (salespersons) discouraged you from making a purchase when you actually had a real interest in their products or services? I’ll bet it has happened numerous times. In fact, I’ll stick my neck out and say that unpleasant representatives cause more loss of sales than any other factor.

I’ll further state that every employee in a company is a representative, from the billing clerk to the cleaning personnel, and each individual can have bearing on a contract cleaning company’s image. If that image is not one of excellence and proficiency, sales will be lost.

There is one sure-fire way to improve your company’s image. SMILE. Teach every employee to do the same. Pretty soon, not only will your workplace be happier, but clients and prospects will notice how pleasant it is to deal with your company. There is no excuse for being unpleasant in any business situation, even if the customer is irate. In fact, the way to diffuse and disarm is to maintain a pleasant demeanor. Smiling helps. True smiles are positive and mood-changing. Teach every employee in your cleaning company to smile its way to higher sales.

The steps to getting more business are actually fairly simple to implement; the problem is few cleaning pros actually understand that they must follow them all the time. Here they are:

- **Promote word-of-mouth advertising.**

This is the foremost method for cleaning companies to get more business – and it’s free. If a contractor does an exceptional job for one client, it is guaranteed that client will tell someone else. Ask a happy customer to give a written endorsement of your work that you may use to show to others. Ask that same client to make a recommendation. Get a list of prospects from them if possible.

- **Record happy clients in a “tickler” file.** Rarely is a cleaning job a one-time operation. Things get dirty again over time. Why forget about a client that is already “sold” on your work? Contact them after an appropriate passage of time to remind them that you would like to work for them again. A phone call or a postcard, or both, are inexpensive ways to “tickle their fancy.”

- **See as many prospects a day as possible.** Here’s the area where most contractors drop the ball. We think that doing a good job is all we have to do to stay in business. Besides, we’re not salespeople; we’re hands-on folks that do a lot of hard work. I contend that the hard work is selling clients to use your company for the job. Like it or not, personal contact with prospects is the best way to get more business. Buy professional business cards, put on decent clothes, bone up on sales techniques, and get in front of people that need your services! Yeah, I know. You have to do the work too. Make time for prospecting and learn how to do it right. There is no excuse for skipping this most important aspect of selling.

- **Budget advertising dollars.** As your business grows, some money needs to be set aside to build your brand name presence. Business cards are great, but the Yellow Pages™ really do make the phone ring. It doesn’t take a full page ad to grab someone’s attention either. A simple text

listing under the most appropriate section is sufficient. Another “must” these days is the dreaded website. Many people browse the web on their cool little smartphones to find information about cleaning companies these days. If you don’t have the knowledge to do it yourself, find someone to build a professional web presence for your company. Don’t forget to run small ads once in a while in local newspapers and business journals too.

- **Man the booths at local trade shows.**

Most towns have area events that are appropriate avenues to advertise your contracting services. Find them. Go to them. Man your booth and be prepared to put your printed information sheets in people’s hands. Load your booth with graphic testimonials to the fine work you have done for others. Make your presence different by coming up with audience participation projects like teaching people how to clean a common item. This demonstrates your skills and involves potential buyers in what you do.

- **Promotional items are simply candy.** Beyond print, the web, and telecommunications, there is the idea that “givies” will help sell your business services.



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WRONG! You sell your services, not a pen or hat. Although your logo may be plastered on the givies, these items are costly and transient. What do I mean? They are simply gifts of appreciation that eventually find their way to file thirteen. Use promo items sparingly as a friendly reminder that you are still out there, but keep plugging in person all the time.

- **The THANK YOU card is perhaps the most important advertising expense.** Always thank people for their business in writing. Always make it a personal note and not a pre-written generic card. Go a step further and send a “thanks” to those prospects that gave of their time to hear what you had to say. After all, time is money – their time; their money. Yours is not important (to them).

- **Create a list of prospects to check back with.** Consider this: if you have qualified your potential client as someone who needs what you are trying to sell; if your company does this job better than any other; if your follow up service is the best there is – are you not obligated to maintain contact with a potential

client until they hire you? The answer is a resounding YES, of course! Not only will you be helping yourself, but they will benefit from your exemplary services. Selling is a two-way street with benefits to both sides. It wastes everyone’s time and money if you don’t eventually garner the contract!

- **Repetition builds sales.** After all of the above and more have been done to build your brand of services, the most important thing to do is keep on, over and over. It is a fact that repetition builds sales effectiveness. Just think about your favorite television commercial. I’ll bet you saw it numerous times. In other words, it became a jingle. Jingle your customers and your potential clients to bring in more business!

- **The proof is in the pudding.** If you make great pudding, people will want to buy it – if they know it’s available. Your number one job is to make sure they do. This takes repetition of all of these steps as long as you remain in business.

I could throw out a bunch of facts and figures to prove what I’m saying, but you wouldn’t believe me. I could say that an inexperienced salesperson in our industry takes eighteen attempts to sell a single new client. I could say that an experienced salesperson in our industry can do it in six. Here’s the deal: you have to get out there in the market and do it. That’s the bottom line.

Never give up on a potential client. If they hire someone else to provide cleaning services, they can certainly entertain the idea of hiring your company instead. It is a matter of discovering what the client really wants. Is it better service? Are there problems that only you can solve? Find out what the problem really is and offer to fix it. Sometimes it takes more than one meeting to discover a client’s true needs. Sometimes it takes fifty. That’s why you should never give up on a qualified prospect. Once you’ve found the magic issue only your company can solve, a new contract is in the making. It’s called the “foot in the door” process. If at first you don’t succeed, try, try, try, try... and keep on trying until the deal is done. Repetition is the key to building a better business.

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