



## Market Knowledge

### **A New Approach to Customer Presentations**

It's common when you're trying hard to make the right impression to say too much. Many salespeople assume the best way to engage a homeowner is to provide lots of facts, figures and anecdotes about how they will do fantastic things for the homeowner. They forget about the most important thing of all – to listen.

Savvy contractors use a sales presentation method I call "walk and talk". They walk around with the customer and he or she does the talking.

Begin the presentation not with a summary of your services and expertise, but with some simple questions like "how can I help you?", "Can you show me the areas you would like me to work on?" Your assignment is not to provide information, but rather to get the customer to specifically show you what they have in mind and what outcomes they are looking for.

Gather information that helps you assess the prospect's specific needs. Ask about when the work will need to be done. Ask if they have seen or heard of any potential options that they like. (This is usually a way to find out what your competitors may have offered in their proposals.) Ask about budgets and payments as the customer usually has a financial number in mind, particularly if they have received another quote.

Run through your quotation checklist and check everything even if it seems obvious. You may already know the water pressure in this neighborhood is 60 PSI, but make a big production of using a gauge and checking anyway. Get a soil sample, take some measurements. It will impress the client that you are an expert preparing to do a good job. Plus, checking things like these will allow you to avoid pitfalls and cost overruns down the road.

Offer up options by asking questions about them. "Would you like to select a mounting location for a rain sensor?", "Have you considered landscape lighting for these handsome trees?", "Do you think this area would benefit from a special focal point?" The power of suggestion may allow you to add on some options to your final quote.

If you have samples, bring them along and have the customer make choices between them. Getting hands-on with sample sprinklers, light fixtures or pavers helps the customer understand the quality of products being provided and helps them make small commitments on colors and styles that move the sale toward a positive conclusion.

Wrap up your successful sales call by writing out what you and your new customer have agreed upon at the kitchen table, then summarize with a ballpark price. "This looks to cost about \$2300, will that work for you?" If it does, you've got a deal



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without needing to prepare a formal document. If it doesn't, it gives you time to ask more questions and value-engineer the project before you submit a final price.

### *About the Author:*

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