



Timely Tips for Closing More Contracting Jobs

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So you've managed to generate qualified leads. What now? How do you turn these potential customers into paying ones? How can you be more competitive in closing the deal?

Keep in mind there are always competitors out there who will offer a lower price. To win business without losing your profits, you need to focus on attracting fewer price-sensitive prospects - and demonstrate a higher level of service, quality and professionalism.

Along these lines, it's important to understand that how you handle interactions with prospective customers is crucial to your success - from the moment you pick up the phone to answer an incoming call, all the way through closing.

Here are a few tips to help you close more quality business.

- **Pick up the phone.** According to an April 2006 survey by FastCall411 of 5,000 local businesses, two-thirds of incoming phone calls go unanswered. What's more, a study by market research firm Synovate found that four out of five Americans regard "immediate availability" by phone as an "important" or the "most important" factor when selecting a local service provider. The take-away? You often only have one chance to sell a new customer. So make sure to have staff available during business hours to pick up the phone or respond to an email in real time. Statistics show that if a potential customer is initially forwarded to a voicemail box, your chances of closing that customer are much lower.
- **Be polite and professional.** Train your reception staff to greet prospective customers in a friendly and professional manner. Also, make sure they identify themselves, and the value your business brings to their project, within the first few moments of the call.
- **Answer your voicemail.** To capture leads during non-business hours, have an answering service or a working voicemail box. Make sure that your automatic greeting is short so that callers don't get frustrated and hang up.

- **Don't dawdle!** Respond to missed phone calls and voicemails as soon as possible. Why give prospects the time to research and locate a competitor if you don't have to?
- **Build trust.** Establishing trust is more important in the home improvement industry than almost any other. After all, potential customers are evaluating you as someone they will invite into their homes - and possibly for an extended period of time. So give them every reason to feel confident in choosing you and your business as a resource.
- **Follow up.** For follow-up meetings in person, be sure to look professional, be prepared to answer any questions a prospect may have, and be ready to provide a quote. The meeting may be your one shot at closing the project. And if that doesn't happen, have a good record-keeping system in place to make sure you follow up.
- **Keep good company.** Belonging to respected trade groups or organizations like the Better Business Bureau, and prominently advertising your affiliation, can bolster trust among potential new customers and help improve sales conversion rates.