

A new prospect calls you up. Then what?

Here's a guide to what you just might say for the best chance of getting the job—even if you charge more than the other guy.

Your cell phone rings, and you answer:

"Thanks for calling Midville Housewashing."

"Hi, I'm calling to get an estimate on having my house pressure washed."

"Great, who is calling please?"

"This is Judy Jones."

"Ms. Jones, this is Jack Johnson. If you can help me out with a little information, I'll explain what we can do for you." (Always use Mr. or Ms. when addressing a customer, as a sign of respect.)

"Now what style home do you have, Mrs. Jones?"

"It's a raised ranch."

"Okay, and what type of siding is it?"

"Aluminum."

"Has it ever been cleaned before, Ms. Jones?"

"I don't think so. We've been here since 1994 and I know we haven't cleaned it."

"You must be getting a tremendous amount of oxidation or chalking on it by now."

"There is! In fact, we were planning on washing it ourselves last year but just never found the time."

"Now that I have this information Ms. Jones, let me explain our service. First, we utilize very sophisticated equipment and detergents made exclusively for the exterior house washing industry." (Don't use the word 'chemicals' due to that term's negative associations.) "Before starting the job, we run test patterns so you'll see exactly what the clean siding will look like. If for any reason it doesn't meet your expectations, the only charge will be a \$35 service fee. I'm sure you would much rather proceed like this, instead of having someone come in, wash your home, only to be dissatisfied, right?"

"Right!"

"You should know that in some situations where surfaces have been neglected and not cleaned at proper intervals, or cleaned with harsh chemicals, the surface may not be sound enough to look like new, even after it's been cleaned. But regular cleaning with the right detergents in the future will really help preserve the look and value of your home."

"I understand."

"Because believe me, your being happy with the job is more important to me than making money from a dissatisfied customer. Now, I also want you to know, assuming that you give us the go-ahead, that we never use detergents or other products that could

harm lawns, shrubs, soil, pets or children. Everything is environmentally safe, because after all, it's your home, and that's important to you." (Here of course, you're creating a 'bond' by showing that you care about the same things they care about.)

"I'm sure, if you've shopped around, you've heard other companies say that their cleaning products are biodegradable. The fact of the matter is, Ms. Jones, given enough time, everything is biodegradable, even your house!" (Often you'll hear a chuckle at this point, indicating that you've made your point.)

As you continue your sales presentation by phone, be sure to allow the homeowner to comment or ask questions; the more interaction there is, the more likely you'll make the sale. Take their considerations seriously, and acknowledge them for asking good questions.

Then continue: "Now just so you know, we start out with the exterior gutters and work our way down to the foundation. We remove all surface oxidation, acid rain, pollutants and mildew. Then when we're through with the cleaning process, we apply a Plex-Master surface sealant which is manufactured from the same chemical family as Plexi-Glass.™ This has been specifically formulated to protect your house and retard future mildew and oxidation. Then before leaving we'll insure that porches, steps, walkways and driveways are rinsed clean of any solutions."

Chances are, the homeowner hasn't heard this level of caring detail from your competitors. So when you present your estimate, she'll understand how much more she's getting for her money.

Keep in mind of course that this phone sales dialog is just a guideline; you don't have to follow it word-by-word. It's intended to create ideas and give you a track to run on when talking to prospective customers.

But if you follow the main principles, adapting them to your own business, you'll learn to become persuasive enough to close on many more jobs than you lose. In fact, by 'planting the seeds' of what an informed homeowner should expect, she will be better able to resist the low-ball estimates of less-reputable contractors.

And of course an educated homeowner will benefit by using a hard-working professional with the knowledge and products that will serve them well for years to come.

Isn't that the kind of customer where future referrals come from?

