

for places to cut. If they're not reminded that your services are a genuine long-term investment...then you're just another expense on the ledger sheet.

Objective information beats a salesy 'pitch'

Since they're unlikely to understand what you do about quality pressure washing, their analysis can be somewhat subjective, which puts you at risk. But when you provide hard information on how much you help preserve their expensive assets, they'll have an objective basis for making the right choices. In their world, making a good business case is the foundation of being taken seriously.

Of course, as in any marketing, we have to understand what's most important to the decision-maker, so we can customize our message to hit the right notes.

Is it just about cost? Then perhaps by using the right products and techniques, you can show them how less-frequent cleanings could suffice. It may cost you a little income, but you'll gain their ongoing loyalty.

Is it about appearance and company image? Maybe do a side-by-side demonstration of how you sweat the details, compared with how a low-cost contractor might knock it out. Remember, seeing is believing.

Are they concerned about environmental and employee-health issues? Prepare a report on the safety of your EnviroSpec detergents and other products, vs. the hazards of straight bleach and fume-producing chemicals. The time you spend on it is an investment in your own business. This approach also shows that you care about the things they care about. And that bond is golden.

Get your message across to the real decider

A written rationale for your quality services also makes sense

when you're dealing with an employee, but can't get through to the CEO or final decision maker. Whether it's a new prospect or an old client, no one can make your case better than you can. At least when something's on paper, your words are more likely to get through to the people who matter most.

Another idea: go further and prepare an analysis of the customer's specific needs, then include several well-thought-out options, with the pros and cons of each. That way, no matter what direction they take, you win.

You can also get creative and shoot a brief video that demonstrates your cleaning superiority. Why not? Sending a prospect a link to your video on YouTube is a great way to stand out as an authority in your field. And that link can easily be shared with anyone.

Be proactive, and never take a customer for granted

Think it through. Are there any other ways in which cutting their cleaning budget might have negative repercussions? Remind them that they're fending off competitors as well, and dirty buildings or vehicles can leave a negative impression on their own current and prospective buyers.

In fact, marketing experts have pointed out that a company's "brand" exists only in the buyer's mind, as the sum total of their experiences with that company. A single bad impression can't be overcome even with a million-dollar advertising budget.

It may be hard to keep a good account these days, but replacing a lost customer can be even harder. So ask questions to understand what's important to each buyer, then present good, objective information that shows you're on their side. That's the difference between a trusted long-term partner and just another vendor.