

The Three Cheapest Ways to Grow Sales

By Ruth King



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When many contractors are asked how to grow sales, they answer with social media, traditional media, or a combination of the two. They forget about the best and ironically, cheapest, methods to grow their customer bases. Here they are:

When you ask most people why they called your company, the two most prevalent answers that you will get in most cases is "a referral" or "I saw your trucks" or "I found you through a Google search." A website is a must in today's world. So, let's look at ways to use referrals, trucks, and stickers to dramatically increase your sales.

Referral programs work. You may pay people for the referrals in many ways. A thank you note is the least that you must do. Some companies write a check. Others send flowers or other gifts. The key is to decide what you are going to do and implement the plan.

Here is a good way to ask for the referrals. The question, "Do you know someone who can use our services?" almost always is answered with "no". A better way to ask the question is to first wait about a month after the service was done, the installation was completed, etc. and call. Find out if the work was done satisfactorily and if they are happy with it. Ask whom they have talked to about the work that was done. Anyone who spends over \$1,000 will tell someone about what they had done in their home or office. These are the potential referrals for you.

Other companies write a referral message on a business card or on a proposal. Others give prospective customers two cards...and say, "here's

a card for you and one for a friend of yours." Many of those "second cards" turn into customers for your company.

Once plumbing and HVAC contractor started asking for referrals and decreased his advertising media budget. His replacement sales increased over \$100,000 and his advertising expense decreased \$30,000 in less than one year. Referrals are now part of his marketing budget and all of his sales people ask for them.

The second sales activity revolves around your trucks. Drive your trucks where you want to do business. Here is the advice given to two people who wanted to start an HVAC business. They wanted to know how to get customers. Choose the neighborhoods that you want to do business in and drive your trucks in those areas. They drove them in those neighborhoods every Saturday morning.

For the first few Saturdays, they were driving without doing any work. Within a few weeks they had received service calls that said, "I saw your trucks in the neighborhood" and soon their trucks were busy producing revenues in the neighborhood each Saturday.

What should be on your trucks? Name, phone number, and website. Many people will snap a picture of your truck and call on their cell phones or look your company up later.

Your company name, phone number, and website must be on the back of the truck – so it is seen when at a stop light.

Make your trucks memorable from a positive perspective – neat clean with unusual graphics. No one will call a telephone number on a dirty, dented

truck – that sends a message that your work will be sloppy.

The third way to dramatically increase sales is to put stickers on everything. The technicians and installers should always have stickers and be required to put stickers on equipment.

They should also go on the breaker box, on garbage disposals, and under the kitchen sink. Many HVAC equipment stickers are bright orange and say "This equipment is under maintenance by COMPANY NAME. For service call xxx-xxx-xxxx." 200 point type is noticeable.

How do you get your field personnel to put the stickers on places where you want them on? What gets measured gets done. So, talk about it. Reward field people for placing the stickers where they are supposed to be. Some companies have a sticker check and have their field people take a digital picture of every job they complete... and one of the pictures has to be of the equipment with the sticker on the equipment.

You'll start noticing a third answer when you ask a customer, "How did you happen to call us"...they'll say, "Your sticker was on our furnace, circuit breaker, etc."

In today's world where social media seems to be the most popular form of advertising and marketing, remember to do easy, inexpensive referral programs, truck signage, and stickers. These activities can dramatically increase your sales and customer base.

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