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## 1994 Technical Bulletins

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### **SIMPLE SELLING FOR THE PROFESSIONAL CARPET CLEANER**

The race is about to begin. Assembled are the world's fastest and most fit. Now is the moment of truth, the moment that proves who has trained themselves the best. Confidence abounds, for each feels he has prepared to win the crown of success. Yet at the same time, we all know only one will finish first. Once that line has been crossed, the years of experience and training will have paid off.

What observers of a race never see are the principles and qualities instilled in training. Because we watch only the race itself, we may fail to appreciate what it really takes to make a winner. The truth is that success is attractive, but it requires preparation.

This same illustration contains the principles of succeeding in the human race. It is our preparation that determines success down the road. It is unreasonable to think anyone could compete unprepared. Before any competition starts, we first have to identify the rules, the goals, and what we have to do to get conditioned.

The goal in carpet cleaning is simple — to be able to build a sound business that consistently makes a decent profit. The rules include understanding your market, learning how to sell, being able to perform and picking up your money. There is much information on identifying your market and a raft on how to clean. What we want to present to you, the professional cleaner, are a few basics about how to sell.

Please realize that unless you learn how to sell, or hire someone to sell for you, you will never get the chance to perform your cleaning magic. Without business, you will be out of business...not what you call a success story, is it? So, now that I have your attention, let's begin training for the race.

#### **WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO SELL?**

We must give a little attention to marketing. You cannot sell anything if there is not a need. The need is not necessarily one you create, it is in the mind of your customer. The need our consumer has is simple. You see, some people with dirty carpet do not perceive the need to have it cleaned and others with almost clean carpet want it cleaned. The lesson is not to prejudge your customer. The goal is to find the ones who perceive a need for cleaning and then sell to them.

Think about this for a moment. Not all people are customers. We only want to spend time marketing to those who are interested in our service and are able to pay us for it. Here are some facts you may want to consider:

- 65 percent of all tufted carpet is installed in homes.
- Carpet in homes is installed in areas that are most susceptible to spotting, spills and tracking.
- Women make the major decision of when to clean and by whom.
- More and more carpets in the home are now higher in quality and lighter in color.

Now these factors can become a pain to you if:

- You don't like selling to women.
- You can't remove dirt from carpet.
- You don't know what it takes to get a woman to buy.
- You came unprepared to do the "best" job.

The second consideration of making sales is using logic. In other words, we have to be able to communicate the value of our service in comparison with their needs. This can be simple or complex, depending on how you make it. We will offer the simple approaches and recommend that you keep it simple, as well.

There are also some basic steps (do's and don'ts) to keep in mind as you sell. This part will discuss approach, eye contact, appearance, attitude and professionalism. Pay attention to it!

And, finally, we will consider the ways you close the sale and handle objections. Too often, people will talk and talk and never ask for the work. A good sales presentation has a goal—to close the sale and do the work.

Looking at all these factors at once can be frightening. However, if you examine and work on them one at a time, you will find that you can be an effective salesperson. With a little practice, you will also find selling your service fun and exciting.

## **WOMEN - YOUR RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER:**

Let me say from the outset that we men many times get frustrated trying to understand women. I do not want to pretend to be any better at it than all the other men out there, but I have found some basic things that will help you sell (communicate) to them:

### **1. Attitude**

Women are especially good at sensing your mood or attitude. Included in this is your ability to convey sincerity. Reading a "canned" sales pitch is the worst thing you can do. Even if you nervously stutter, try to be sincere about what you can do for them.

Mentally separate yourself from the problems of the day before you start talking. If you are thinking about the truck payment, she will sense it. If you are not totally interested in what she needs and are not willing to listen, she will not be receptive and rightly so. The best service salesperson takes a complete interest in the needs of each customer and gives her his undivided attention.

Attitude also includes the manner in which you talk about your service. Be excited and confident. These were qualities you had when you started and what impressed people enough to use you. Be proud of your abilities, but let your customer know that what you know will mean big benefits for them.

### **2. Appearance**

"You can't judge a book by its cover," you say. But the truth is that you will first be judged by how you look. Professionals wear a uniform! They are not afraid to wear their company name and personal name on their shirt. We have to face the fact that customers have certain expectations about who they want in their home. We have a right to dress and to look any way we want, but it may cost us the sale. In addition, long hair and beards are often psychologically threatening to women. A lot of this is a professional attitude. We should be willing to fit the mold of what the homeowner expects in a professional. So look honestly in the mirror and ask, "Do I look like a clean-cut professional"? If the answer is "no", correct it!

### **3. Manner**

How do you treat women? You might ask your wife (or another woman who will give you the truth) this question and then sit down and listen. Most men are surprised to learn that they are not always kind and respectful and we may do negative things such as a lack of eye contact. Good manners include such things as "thank you", "please", and "may I", as opposed to "yeah", "huh", and "look, lady".

Also be aware of doing anything that would suggest a lack of respect, whether for her personally or for something in her home. Her home is a reflection of her personality. So any comments of opinion about color, style, or amount of dirt are considered derogatory. Quite the opposite! Look for a few things you can compliment her on.

The primary thing to remember is that all people respond to some of the most basic principles of life. They are respect, sincerity, honesty, and kindness.

## PRESENTATION PRINCIPLES

In the free enterprise system, we have simplified the process of business. People want a product or service, they form opinions as to what that service is worth, they listen to readjustments that are reasonable about cost, and they buy.

The key to move us toward the sale is three-fold. That is to say that we have to apply three interrelated principles.

### 1. **Confidence**

Think back to the last thing you purchased that required the assistance of a salesperson. What convinced you in the sales process that you were getting what you needed? It was the confidence of the salesperson. Now be careful here! Don't confuse confidence with cockiness. When a salesman says, "trust me," you can pretty well assume you can't. True confidence is a belief by the salesperson that what they are selling is valuable and worthwhile, as well as needed by their customers.

Do you have doubts about the value of your service? Think about this for a moment! Residential carpeting is the "trap" for virtually everything subject to gravity. Atmospheric soil such as cooking oils and pollutants, mud, grease, tar, food and beverage spills, pet and human skin, hair and body fluids—well, just everything ends up in the carpet. Who, oh who, can remove it? You, that's who! Your service as a health protector of the homeowner is worth a great deal. So have confidence.

Do you feel because of the commitment you have made to investing in high-tech equipment, safe cleaning agents and technical training, that you are the "best" cleaner around? Then have confidence and tell someone! Customers want to see confidence and hear that what they are getting is the very best, bar none, guaranteed!

There is only one reason why you may not have confidence. It is a requirement for gaining it. It is:

### 2. **Knowledge:**

How can you sell something you are unfamiliar with? You can't! Education is essential. But we are not just saying that going to a bunch of cleaning schools is the sole answer. It is true that technical training courses periodically are important to keep you updated. However, the knowledge we are referring to here is knowledge about your service, your consumer and your abilities and value. When you have a great service, a service you know positively will bring benefit to people you work for, write those benefits down. This is what you sell! Memorize them!

Be willing to place yourself in your customer's shoes and envision their needs and concepts. Don't run down a misconception about cleaning just because you know better. For instance, why is it that the most standard question asked by consumers when they call is, "How much do you charge?", when a national survey shows the No. 1 concern they have is quality? Simply put, they don't know any better. Wouldn't you be surprised if someone called asking the chemical composition of your cleaning agents, or the ambient working temperature of your method? The reasonable cleaner will look beyond the first question and work at a presentation that instills confidence in purchasing their service.

Here is where the challenge lies. Do you know what your customer wants? Are you willing to confidently explain the value of a superior service? Or are you jumping to the conclusion that price is all they are really interested in? Your knowledge supports a method that will give them benefits. Now all you have to do is to make the effort to communicate those benefits and close the sale.

Where do you get that knowledge and what quality is the foundation of the sale? It is nothing more than:

3. **Humility:**

Now this sounds silly! The best salespeople are humble, and proud of it. But it's true. Humility will help you to quit thinking about yourself and start listening to your customer. Humility will allow you to make their concerns your concerns. Once you are sincerely interested in them, it will enable you to use your knowledge to help by providing your service confidently, and then close the sale.

## WHAT DO YOU SAY?

The concept of many a cleaner is that sales is just fancy talking. True sales is nothing more than open and honest communication. None of us have the ability to read the mind of our customer, so we have to ask questions and establish communication in order to conduct business.

Always remember that there is no replacement for someone who is sincerely trying to help. I like this expression:

*"People don't care how much you know — until they know how much you care."*

Most people will come to the conclusion to buy if given enough good reasons to do so. What carpet consumers are wanting to hear directly relates to why they even have carpet. So why do women buy carpet?

1. **Color:**

Women most often are responsible to decorate their own home. It is a reflection of their taste and personality. The color must match a "feeling" of what they want their home to be, as well as the drapes, furniture and paint.

2. **Style:**

Here, again, no two people are exactly alike. That's why there are a number of dye, tuft, looped and cut patterns. The variety is almost endless, but the point again is that it is their preference.

3. **Value:**

After she has selected the right color and style, she is ready to address price and value. Why do so many people go into the retail store bent on getting the \$9.95 a yard carpet and walk out with the \$19.95 a yard carpet? Simple — it's value and the more they spend, the more of an investment they have to protect.

Now, let's use this information to communicate the value of our service. We have the choice of trying to sell by describing our equipment and chemical or by describing how our service relate to what they were thinking when they bought the carpet. Unless you are trying to sell your equipment, I suggest you concentrate on the latter.

The second type customer you will encounter is the commercial account. I honestly wish I could say he is as easy to reason with, however, he feels that every decision he makes is only qualified by whether or not it will fit into the budget. He was not consulted when the decision to install carpet was made. He does not understand the carpet is a big investment for his company. Let's face it, he doesn't know a thing about the decor of the business. But, the reasons why carpet was installed in his building are valuable for you to understand.

1. **Safety** - The safest floor covering is beyond a doubt, carpet, but again "Jack" may not appreciate this.
2. **Acoustics** - Carpeting is more responsible for accomplishing acoustical "softening" and lowering the stress level in a building.
3. **Decor** - Many businesses are judged by the appearance of cleanliness. The most common are hotels and restaurants. However, everyone wants to be looking at an attractive business. The clean carpet carries the most responsibility in this regard.
4. **Value** - Carpet is an investment to do all the above while at the same time being a cost-effective floor covering in the initial purchase.

When considering the commercial account, the first and primary challenge is to understand the rules of getting the opportunity

to present yourself. Your first goal is to set up an appointment just so you can explain your service. Jack is a busy man so don't waste time. Here is a sample presentation you may want to use:

"Jack, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I represent \_\_\_\_\_ Carpet Cleaning. I understand you are a busy person and no doubt have a cleaning service currently, but we have been demonstrating a program in our area that has been amazing people. We feel so confident in the results and cost-effectiveness of this program, that we have been setting up appointments to review it with businesses in this area. It only takes ten minutes of your time. Now, I have two times open this week. One is Tuesday and the other is Thursday. Which one of these is better for you?"

Once you have the appointment, SHOW UP ON TIME! When you meet him, look and act like a professional. The conversation may go like this:

"First of all, I want to thank you for your time. I promise to only take the ten minutes we agreed on. In order to show you the value of this carpet investment care program, I need to ask you a few questions. Please, if I am not clear or if I don't understand your needs in relation to your carpet, feel free to interrupt me. We perceive that the carpet is a part of the investment you have in your business. It is true of any good investment that if you maintain it, it serves its purpose well. Don't you feel that is true? (Wait for an answer). We also recognize that cleaner carpet not only lasts longer but is also a good reflection on the business itself. Cleaner carpet also provides a clean and healthy atmosphere for you and your employees. Don't you agree? (Wait for an answer). So here is the main questions, Jack, doesn't it makes sense that the best cleaning job in town is going to provide you with the best program? If I could show you the best program in town and make it fit your budget, would it be worth your time to open-mindedly examine it?"

By now you should have received three "yes" answers. The only thing left is to offer to show Jack "the best cleaning job in town". (Demonstrate)

"Jack, let me clean the carpet in the area that seems to be the most difficult to maintain. If you don't think it isn't the absolute best job in town, I'll leave, but if it is the best, all I ask is that you pay me. Does that sound reasonable to you?"

Now is when you will have to be prepared to do the best cleaning ever. Make sure he will be there to judge the results. If he will not, reschedule the demo. After you have established your value, ask the closing questions; "Jack, isn't this the kind of cleaning you would like to see in your business? How would it be if I went ahead and at least cleaned this complete area today then tomorrow I will start to work up an estimate for the rest?"

Please keep in mind that the test area will be no bigger than a 10' x 15' section so that if they say their carpet cleaner can do as well, you can leave it for him to try to match. Be sure to collect your check from him if you have pleased him. It will tell you if you have the right person that can issue checks or at least make the decision to spend the money.

The final part is the measuring out of the job and presentation of the yearly cleaning program divided by twelve, which will be the monthly billing for that business. Make out a contract and have the appropriate parties sign it.

If you are doing residential cleaning, the following is a presentation I used to help my homeowner decide to use me. After I share it, I want to analyze it. (Always pre-inspect and write down the carpet construction, fiber of the face yarn, secondary backing, age and whether or not it is stain-resistant, etc. before you give this presentation).

"Jan, first of all I want to compliment you on your choice of carpet. I really like how it matches the furniture and draperies. Did you have an interior decorator do your home or did you pick it out personally? (Wait for an answer and be ready with a compliment). I'm sure you are going to be very happy you called us. There are a few things we do as a regular part of our business that has a number of benefits for our clients. Let me explain them to you."

"First of all, we guarantee we are the best in town. Nobody will out-clean us. That means, the better the cleaning job, the better the carpet looks, which is a good reflection on you. Not only does the original color return, but many are surprised to find that the style comes back as well."

"On top of this, everyone knows that cleaner carpet lasts longer. Reasonably, the better the cleaner, the longer it lasts."

“And finally, one of the things we are most proud to offer is that our exclusive method so thoroughly cleans that it counteracts a lot of the common bacteria associated with soil. So not only does the carpet look good and smell good, it is safe and healthy for you and your family. Isn't that what you want from a professional cleaner?”

“Now, what I have done here (show her the estimate and preinspection) is to show you exactly what we will do in cleaning. It also documents the carpet construction for our files. We do that just in case you should have a pipe break and you would need us to handle it. We would pull the file and look at it so we know what to do even before we arrive. It also reminds us, each time we come to clean, exactly what method and cleaning agents we will use.”

“Notice, here (point to) are the areas we will clean. We will be using our van mounted cleaning plant. We will move all the major furniture, block and tab them to protect the carpet and furniture, pre-vacuum the high traffic areas, pre-spot and precondition the carpet, (all of this is written down) high temperature extract, and then groom the carpet. Did I leave anything out?” (Wait for a comment).

“You might be interested to know that these services are extras with other companies, but we feel you are entitled to know what a professional cleaning job involves. All I need is your O.K. and we can go to work”. (Have her sign the bid!) “Now looking at my schedule, I can get you in on Wednesday or Friday of next week. Which is better for you?”

I don't suggest you use this word-for-word. I would alter it each time I used it to keep myself from sounding as if I had memorized it. I do suggest you read it aloud and look for some of the main points:

*First*, look for ways to compliment your customer.

*Second*, confidently express how good you are before she sees the price.

*Third*, explain the benefits of your service in relation to her carpet and family.

*Fourth*, reinforce your honesty and professionalism.

*Fifth*, close the sale!

Did you catch those points in the presentation? If so, you are ready for the next step — developing your own presentation. I found that the best way is to write it down and then record yourself. Play it back and ask yourself if you would buy cleaning from this person. Analyze the weaknesses you hear and record it again. Continue to work on being confident but never sacrifice sincerity. In order to be convincing, you have to know what to do, believe in what you do and love what you do.

Some progress faster than others, but most find that by working on your presentation once a night for about one half hour, for just a couple of weeks, you will see remarkable results.

## **CLOSING THE SALE**

The most difficult part of the sale is the close. It is the whole purpose of our presentation. It is like the finish line to an athlete. Before you become too frightened of it, think about it.

You have prepared well. You have made the commitment to be the best. You can prove your value. You are honest and sincere. You have the best service available and they NEED you. So why on earth would you be afraid to ask for the order?

The common fear we all face is called rejection. But what is the worst thing that can happen? They could say NO! That's it — nothing worse! The point here is that we should never take “No” personally. They did not reject you as a person, they just rejected an offer. All we need to do is find out why and then close the sale again.

This is where the customer brings up objections. Objections are nothing more than things they want cleared up before they buy. So answer them calmly and confidently. The following are a few examples of objections and how you may overcome them:

## **CUSTOMER CLEANER**

“I have called other cleaners for bids.”

“Well that's fine. I like to comparison shop I'll get back to you too. There is something I would like you to think about. Your carpet is the third most expensive investment in your life. How well a carpet looks is a reflection on all of us. A better cleaned carpet provides you and your family with a healthier atmosphere. We guarantee to take care of your investment while at the same time guaranteeing to be the absolute best. Now isn't that who you were looking for when you called? (Allow an answer) Then, let me go ahead and at least put your cleaning on my schedule so I can guarantee a time that is most convenient to you. Would a Tuesday or a Friday be better for you?”

"That's a lot more than I thought it would be. "Isn't it true that when we find something of it would be." Value we end up spending a little more than we planned? We recognize that there are other companies who are cheaper than us, but we guarantee the absolute best care for your carpet. Does that sound reasonable to you or isn't that the kind of care you're looking for?"

"I can get it done for half the price!" "I have never promised anyone I would be the absolute cheapest, just the absolute best. Unfortunately, there are companies who advertise low per room prices just to get in your door. Often they add services you did not want and you end up paying far more than what we charge. We refuse to be like that! With our service, price and quality are guaranteed before we clean. Isn't that when you really want?"

"I'll have to think about it". "We realize that making a decision to have your carpet investment cleaned is an important one. That is why we are trying to answer any questions you may have while we are here. Let me ask you, is there a particular reason you don't want to schedule it now?"

"I'll have to talk to my husband." (Generally, this is a "pass the buck" way of saying there is some reason she is not ready to buy). "As a husband, I appreciate it if my wife wants to talk to me about things like this. Yet, I respect the fact that she is in charge of our home and is very capable of making a cleaning decision on her own. If you would feel more comfortable, I would be glad to come back this evening to discuss it with you both. Does that sound more reasonable to you?"

"I heard steam cleaning will ruin my carpet. "Du Pont, Monsanto, and Allied, the people who invented carpet, disagree with that statement. Let me show you these quotations about steam cleaning. Who would know better than the companies that have their own laboratories? On top of that, we guarantee that you will be satisfied with our process. Steam cleaning is recognized not only as the most effective cleaning procedure, but it is healthier for you and your family. Aren't those the things you expect with professional cleaning?"

## QUALIFYING YOUR CUSTOMER

I have found that many times salespeople are so hungry for a sale they fail to be selective. The result is that, along with the good customers, they also work for the worst people. You know the ones! They are nearly impossible to please. They make excuses for not having a check when you are done, and when the next cleaner comes along with a price of 10¢ lower than yours, your customer is gone. So why don't you screen those people out?

Frankly, some people do not qualify as your customers. This fact has a lot to do with marketing, but when you present your service, offer to guarantee the best job and then:

**YOU** are...

- told all carpet cleaners are alike
- avoided when it's time to collect
- told you are ridiculously over-priced
- told you don't know what you are doing

You have a person that does not qualify to have the best cleaning service clean their carpet. So leave! DO NOT take this person's attitude as constructive counsel. This type of person is bent on hurting your profitability just to get a better bargain. That is the kind of customer you want your competition to have.

Now I don't want to spend anymore time on negative attitudes, so let's take a hard look at what you want to clean and who you want as a repeat customer, or as we call it, a client.

The second type of person is one that has a few ideas about carpet cleaning, what it should cost and what level of performance to expect, but needs to be convinced they called the right service. These are the people I like! If they are reasonable, want quality and look for performance, I'm their man! You should be too! They may have a few questions or objections, but most often they are looking for reasons to qualify you as the right choice. Don't be offended, be happy they want to spend the time to get to know your value as a professional.

Sometimes these people are right on the edge of believing me and yet can't make up their mind. I found that a "proof of the pudding" demonstration is the ice breaker. I simply say, "Jan, I can see you have some final doubts. I have a way of helping you. Please allow me to clean a small section of your carpet here inside your door. If you don't like the results, I'll immediately stop and there is no charge. If you do like it, we'll go ahead and clean the areas you want taken care of. How does that sound to you?" If you're good, this will close the sale.

The third customer is the one that calls on the telephone and says, "I need my carpet cleaned. When can you come and do it? I'll leave the house unlocked and a blank check on the table." Don't laugh! We are bound to get them once in a while. Here, you may want to briefly ask if one of your clients recommended you and if so, which one. The reason is that if it is a referral, you want to be sure to send a thank you note to the person who gave the referral.

## **SOME SERIOUS CONCLUSIONS**

Now after reading all this, I hope you have come to some basic conclusions. Being able to reason with yourself is the beginning of being able to reason with others and to sell your service. So what are some of these conclusions?

- A. People have carpet.
- B. You clean carpet for people.
- C. Other people clean carpet.
- D. You clean better than other people.
- E. People expect to pay for cleaning.
- F. You charge for cleaning.

This sounds painfully simple. Yet simplicity is the easiest to remember and control the sale. Only when we try to make rocket science out of communication, do we fail as sales people. Sales is simple. It is looking into the needs of the one you want to sell to, finding them, telling them how you fill these needs, and agreeing on price.

If you want to enter the race of having a successful cleaning service company, then you have to go into training in order to be a contender. Don't be satisfied with being a part of the "pack" no one hears of. Be determined to be a leader. It is only from the "leaders" that the winner will emerge.

If you like this attitude, re-read this information and apply it! Search out other valuable sources to motivate you and educate you about sales. After you have done so, you can throw up your arms because here comes the ribbon - and you are in the lead!