

How Garage Door Selling Has Changed

10 Questions for Scott O'Neill

Editor's Note: Scott O'Neill has been providing sales tips for our magazine since 2004. In this special article, we ask him 10 questions about the latest changes in the task of selling garage doors.

Have residential garage door sales finally rebounded in your area (California)?

Scott: Absolutely! Since 2011, the market picked up on all residential garage door sales.

How have residential customers changed from those during the recession?

Scott: Interestingly, some customers have been more guarded, even higher-end clients. It seems as if the market has learned a lesson to not overspend. Clients are certainly recognizing the value in the garage door in addition to price.

Those in entry-level home markets, of course, tend to still look for less-expensive garage door solutions. More affluent areas are apt to look for detailed/style garage doors, yet with a careful attention to budget. Either way, today vs. five years ago, clients are listening to more than mere price.



Compared with five or 10 years ago, how has the task of selling residential garage doors changed?

Scott: Enormously. We used to convince the customer to come to the showroom. Now, I often ask for their address and begin the consultation on the phone as I look at their house on Google Street Maps. I then ask questions about the reason for their purchase, and I offer my sage professional advice about design.

This saves time and gets directly to the clients' needs. I think it's the most important way to serve every client in every business model in today's market.

How has customer use of the Internet forced you to change your approach to selling?

Scott: Since there is so much information on the Internet, it's even more important to capture their attention by asking relevant questions about

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their purpose/intent. It is best to understand what they need first.

When you consider all the facets of their needs, from design to function to time of ownership, it leads to sincere guidance as opposed to quick-sale tactics or aiming for your objectives instead of theirs. In the end, I operate with win-win in mind and share that with my clients.

What has been the most effective way to get customers to post online reviews of your company?

Scott: Directly by asking. I find that some online review sites such as Yelp are skewed, so it's wise to find the review sites that are most popular in your market area. Ours is Diamond Certified. In our region, it's a good indicator of true customer satisfaction.

What is the most helpful sales tool provided by your manufacturer suppliers?

Scott: The virtual design tools are excellent ways for customers to envision prospective garage doors on their very homes. Visual aids help beyond words.

What sales assistance do you wish manufacturers would provide?

Scott: Offering co-promotions and incentives for certain series would give dealers tangible savings to pass onto their customers. LiftMaster does this, but more door manufacturers could offer specials for those slower months of the year.

If you had to hire a residential salesperson today, what are the top two or three personal attributes you'd look for?

Scott: A good listener, truthful, and a great communicator.

Why those three?

Scott: You need a good listener who can capture the needs and wants of the buyer. Being truthful is your best safety net; clients need someone who can compare different door brands and models honestly. When sales reps are not truthful, customers can bite back in negative reviews on social media.

Communication skills are key. If you can effectively get clients to understand how your company serves their needs, you can often win that business, regardless of price.

Looking back on your own career as a salesperson, what was the biggest mistake you made in your early years?

Scott: Presuming what the customer wants or needs. Knowledge is important, but it's more important to learn each client's objectives. You can then apply your knowledge to make sure their needs are met. This is how to be a skilled sales advisor, not merely a salesperson. ■

Scott O'Neill has been in the garage door business since 1986 and a sales manager since 1992 at Madden Door, Martinez, Calif. You can contact him for sales consulting at scottdoneill@yahoo.com.

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