

Successful Upsell Strategies

100 DOOR DEALERS SHARE SALES SECRETS

Editor's Note: For this story, we gathered upselling comments and advice from more than 100 door dealers from North America and beyond. Most respondents to our survey were seasoned professionals who have been selling our products for decades.

We have pored through the large volume of dealer comments and selected the best and most helpful remarks. If you read only one story this decade, read this one.

About the survey: In February we sent an email to 1,977 garage door dealers throughout the United States and Canada, inviting them to take our online survey. In all, 170 surveys were completed.



The Key to Success

There are two ways to increase sales. You can sell to more customers, or you can sell more to the customers you have.

“Upselling is the key to any business’s bottom line,” declares one door dealer in Oregon.

But *true upselling* benefits more than just your business. “Upselling is critical to the financial success of our industry and to the proper operation of a customer’s door,” adds Martin Madden, an Overhead Door distributor in South Bend, Ind.

Madden is right. The beneficiaries of true upselling include our entire industry, your business, and your customers.

A Dirty Word

“*True upselling*” is an important concept. As many door dealers told us, “upselling” can be a dirty word.

“I don’t like the term ‘upselling’ because it sounds manipulative,” says Randy Oliver of Hollywood-Crawford Overhead Door in San Antonio, Texas.

Since 2002, this magazine has published many reports of dealers who have a twisted

view of upselling. Such dealers commonly focus on residential repair and take advantage of customers by routinely replacing parts that work fine and charging exorbitant prices for those parts.

“Unfortunately, we often see companies that rip off customers,” adds Mark Northfield of All Seasons Garage Door, Minneapolis, Minn. He says the industry needs to clearly identify the difference between ripping off and upselling.

A Proper Definition

Randy Oliver has already considered that task, and he offers a definition of a door dealer’s proper role in sales. “We are garage door consultants seeking to fill the needs of our customers with products and services that they will be happy with for years to come.”

“We never lie to the client,” adds Albuquerque dealer Andy Pomroy of Windsor Door Sales. “We never sell the client something they don’t need.”

“Upselling is the key to any business’s bottom line”

As we’ve reported, some technicians have quotas to run up a service bill to more than \$400. Then they justify the upsell by thinking that the new parts, though unnecessary and expensive, are good for the customer.

“I upsell when there is an obvious benefit to the customer, but I resent it when it’s a company’s mode of operation,” notes Steven Harris of Pacific Overhead Door, Portland, Ore. “The practice has really tarnished our industry.”

Asking Questions

Sales experts stress that proper upselling must be done with the client’s best interests in mind, and that includes fair pricing. If you truly respect the customer and are seeking to build a long-lasting relationship, you won’t rush the sale and go after the quick buck.

“Don’t go pushing your opinion on the customer,” says Alan Purcell of Just Garages in Wayne, N.J. “Listen to what they want. It’s their home.”

Listening is not a common practice of rip-off artists. Proper upselling requires a total focus on the customer’s overall needs for their garage door system. You begin by asking the customer questions about their wants and needs.

“Believe me, if you get the customer talking about what he wants or what he has in his garage, he will forget about the question, ‘How much is a regular door? That’s all I need,’” says Don Musgrave, a veteran salesman for Architectural Sales of Evansville, Ind.

The Sales Appeal of Curb Appeal

We asked dealers to share helpful questions or statements they make while consulting with customers. When talking about a new garage door, many dealers talk about the

door’s impact on return on investment and the curb appeal of the home.

A Virginia dealer noted that the annual Cost vs. Value study (see pp. 28-30) helps to demonstrate the excellent value of a garage door upgrade. He also cites statements from local real estate agents whose clients have not even wanted to look at a house with an unsightly garage door.

“Dollar for dollar, a quality garage door increases the value of the home more than most home improvements,” is a point that New Jersey dealer Alan Purcell often makes.

“For only \$XXX, you can differentiate your home from your neighbor’s home,” is a favorite statement of an Ohio dealer.

Putting the statement in the form of a question can be an effective way to

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encourage the customer to think about the curb appeal issue. “Would you like to update the look of your house while adding to the resale value?” adds a dealer from North Carolina.

Bill Dover of Dover & Company, a longtime dealer in Flint, Mich., simply asks, “Do you want your garage door to look different from your neighbor’s?”

Insulation Fascination

Our February upselling survey revealed that “upgraded section construction,” such as insulated sections, is the garage door upgrade that dealers are the most successful at selling. (Upgraded models, such as higher-end carriage style doors, ranked second. See the chart below.)

Dealers use a variety of statements to help customers see the value of insulated doors.

Top Garage Door Upgrades

We gave dealers this list of common upgraded features of residential garage doors. We then asked them to rank them (#1, #2, #3, etc.) according to the upgrades that they are most successful at selling.

| Ranking Score | Garage Door Upgrade |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 2.25 | Upgraded section construction |
| 2.66 | Upgraded styles/models |
| 3.16 | Upgraded windows |
| 4.04 | Upgraded springs |
| 4.32 | Upgraded rollers |
| 4.58 | Upgraded colors |

- “Your garage door spends most of its life in the closed position. Treat it like another exterior wall to your home with the high R-value we can offer,” says a New York dealer.
 - A Virginia dealer tells customers, “Insulated doors pay for themselves very quickly in our market.”
 - “Higher R-value means more savings on your heating and cooling bills; it also provides you with a stronger door,” adds a dealer from Illinois.
 - “For a little more money, you can upgrade to a higher R-value,” says a Missouri dealer. “Take \$189 over the life of your door, and it’s a bargain.”
- “Upgrading from a non-insulated door to a steel sandwich is the easiest,” says Scott Hoffman of Doorworks in Wisconsin

Rapids, Wis. “Just hold up your non-insulated sample and knock on it.”

Seeing Is Believing

Many dealers agree that Hoffman’s suggestion is indeed a successful approach.

“Customers love to see sample sections,” says a door dealer in Georgia. “Ninety percent of the time, they will upgrade to a steel-backed door when they see and feel (and hear) the difference.”

Yes, seeing is believing. Several dealers cite the selling advantage of having customers come to their showrooms to see upscale doors firsthand.

Another way to visually explain the advantages of an upgrade is with a computer tablet. “Our techs take a picture and show on their tablets what the house will look like,” says Mike Lombardi of Garage Door Guys, Denver, Colo.

Door visualization programs are particularly effective when selling upscale garage doors with distinctive designs.

It’s a Question of Quality

The upsell task commonly centers around one issue: quality. Yes, some builders and short-term homeowners will only want the cheapest door to fill the garage opening. But most customers have some interest in quality.

How do you introduce the quality issue when the typical customer seems to be only interested in price?

Quality Questions

The experienced dealers in our survey shared several statements and questions they pose to customers:

- A Missouri dealer asks, “Is your purchase only about money, or do you want to consider quality and options?”
- “How often do you buy a cheaper item and then later wish that you would have spent a little more for better quality?” asks Roger Morgan of Morgan Door in Burley, Idaho.
- A North Carolina dealer points out that the upgrade cost is nominal for a purchase that is going to last 20 years. “It’s a lot cheaper to do it now than to try to upgrade later,” he adds.
- “You will pay almost twice as much for an entrance door that you don’t even use. Yet

Top Garage Door Opener Upgrades

We gave dealers this list of common upgraded models of residential garage door openers. We then asked them to rank them (#1, #2, #3, etc.) according to the upgrades that they are most successful at selling.

| Ranking Score | GDO Upgrade |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| 1.55 | Belt drive |
| 2.26 | DC motor |
| 3.00 | Upgraded horsepower |
| 3.19 | Direct drive or wall-mount |

the garage door is a moving wall that is typically less expensive than the entrance door,” says Harry Helton of Helton Overhead Door Sales, Lexington, Ky.

Selling quality is good for the customer, and it’s good for the dealer. Selling the cheapest door not only offers thin profit margins, it also often results in no-charge call-backs that drain your resources.

“People don’t call back to tell you the door they bought is too good,” says Compaan Door of Holland, Mich.

I remember about 25 years ago, I saw a sign that hung on the wall of a garage door dealer. It simply said, “Quality is remembered long after price is forgotten.”

Educate. Educate. Educate.

Many dealers expressed that upselling is primarily a task of educating. This approach rightly positions the dealer as an intelligent expert who can share his or her knowledge with customers who are not likely to know much about our products.

“Educating your customer is key to upgrade selling,” states a dealer in Hawaii.

Indeed, as an Ohio dealer adds, educated customers make better decisions. Buying the cheapest product can be a bad decision.

There’s more to the decision than just the lowest price, explain Brenda and Craig Newby of Premier Overhead Doors, Almond, Wis. “We educate the client on our product and the competitor’s product, and we let the client ask us questions.”

Sometimes, the competitor is the big box store near the area mall, and dealers may need to address that issue head-on. “Inform them about the quality lacking in box store garage doors and openers,” adds Jacob Schneider of Canadoor Door Systems in Alliston, Ontario.

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DETAILS

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Judges

Dutchess Overhead Door in Poughkeepsie, New York



BEFORE



AFTER

**2013
WINNER**

GRAND PRIZE

tickets

2

game

4

cash

\$1,500

Two tickets to see a championship baseball game in October (yes, that one – we just can't say the name), plus two nights' hotel accommodations and a \$1500 travel voucher.

2nd PLACE

winners

2

gift cards

2

cash

\$1,000

Two runners-up each receive a \$1000 gift card.

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A Professional's Recommendation

Many customers are dazed and confused by all the styles and options available. They may not be bold enough to admit it, but they are often desperate for a professional's recommendation. That's where your friendly and honest input can produce an upsell to a better product.

A Canadian dealer in Vancouver, B.C., simply says, "We recommend ...". Those two words can be more powerful than you think.

"Let the customer know what you installed on your own home," advises Dennis Winstead of Wilson Overhead Door in Wilson, N.C.

If you're reluctant to share your own thoughts, share what your typical customers think. As a Utah dealer often says, "This is the model most of our customers prefer."

Do You Want Fries With That?

An upsell purchase is not only an upgrade to a better model. An upsell can also be an encouragement to consider helpful add-on accessories such as a keyless entry pad.

McDonald's hit on a successful add-on upsell strategy in drive-thru sales by training employees to simply ask, "Do you want fries with that?"

Servers at upscale restaurants perform a similar add-on strategy when they ask, "Would you like to see the dessert menu?" Even better is the strategy of simply placing a dessert menu in everyone's hands at the appropriate time.

Similarly, most items on Amazon now routinely come with this statement: "Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought ..." and "Frequently Bought Together ...". This simple information undoubtedly generates millions of dollars in add-on purchases.

How have you built an add-on strategy into your sales process? Many dealers shared the add-on upsell question they typically ask customers.

- "Have you ever considered ...?" is recommended by an Ohio dealer.
- A Kentucky dealer prefers, "Would you be interested in ...?"
- "Are you aware of the options available to you?" asks Claude Thompson of Martin Garage Doors Hawaii.
- When selling openers, a Kansas dealer asks, "Do you realize the new technology and new options that are now available?"

From that point, the sales discussion can explore keyless entry pads, battery backups, upgraded remote controls, upgraded wall-mounted control station, smartphone operable units, and more.

How Often Do You Upsell?

With residential customers, how often do you attempt to upsell the customer to upgraded products or add-on accessories?

| Answer Options | Response Percent |
|--|------------------|
| We attempt to upsell a majority of our customers. | 30.6% |
| We attempt to upsell every single customer. | 24.7% |
| We attempt to upsell almost every customer. | 12.4% |
| We attempt to upsell about half of our customers. | 10.6% |
| We attempt to upsell a little less than half of our customers. | 8.2% |
| We don't attempt to upsell any customers. | 4.7% |
| We don't sell to residential customers. | 4.7% |
| We attempt to upsell less than a third of our customers. | 4.1% |

What's New?

Another simple approach to upselling is discussing the universally appealing topic of "What's new?" Most people's daily habits include a daily dose of getting "the news" from a daily newspaper, radio news, their home page on their computer, or an evening network news broadcast.

Garage door dealers, like any household appliance dealer, have news to tell, too. New technology, new convenience features, and new options are becoming available all the time. Who wants a garage door that was popular in the 1980s when you can have the latest and greatest model?

Garage door and opener sales have changed a lot in the last decade as the product line has expanded greatly. Dealers have a lot of news to tell the typical customer who is clueless about the latest trends and options.

An Iowa dealer, for example, finds it effective to introduce customers to new

styling, new windows, and new finishes. A New York dealer similarly tells customers the news about new looks, new doors, better insulation, new glass options, and new colors.

The "What's new?" sales discussion is a constantly evolving one. Your "newscast" to today's customers should be different from the one you gave a year ago.

"Being able to operate your door from a smartphone is starting to catch on," says Scott Hoffman of Doorworks. Dealers who have been reluctant to learn about new products may be ushering themselves into obsolescence.

An Indiana dealer reports, "Wall-mounted operators are my fastest-climbing upgrade. It will make number one next year."

The Combo Meal

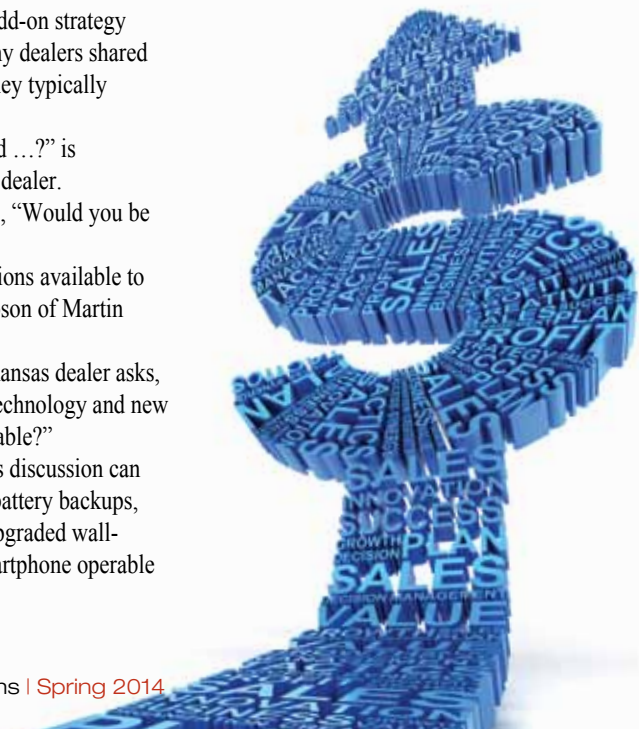
Years ago McDonald's hit on another successful upsell strategy when they started selling their upscale burgers like Big Macs in a combo meal with large fries and a large Coke. The upsell was built into the package deal.

Other industries have caught on. Communications companies commonly offer bundled pricing of phone service plus Internet plus TV. Even airlines offer package deals of airfare plus hotel plus car rental.

Some door dealers are doing the same. "We package many of the upgrades as a standard package with an operator and door," says a dealer in Texas. "This helps us eliminate selling cheaper products, and it reduces the possibilities of warranty calls."

An Oregon dealer takes a similar approach. "We automatically upgrade the rollers to a better roller on most doors," he says. "And our initial residential operator offered is a 3/4-HP belt-drive DC motor."

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Selling From the Top Down

When upselling, do you start with a basic product and then offer upgrades, or do you start with an upscale purchase and work downward?

“Many companies start their sale with the cheapest products and then work their way

the upscale product first. Once you have showed them a door for \$450, it is almost impossible to sell them a better product for \$850.”

Likewise, Ed Hermanns of Merchantville Door, Collingswood, N.J., starts at the top and works his way down. It’s always easier to downgrade from a premium product, he says.

Top GDO Accessories

We gave dealers this list of common accessories for residential garage door openers. We then asked them to rank them (#1, #2, #3, etc.) according to the accessories that they are *most successful* at selling.

| Ranking Score | GDO Accessory |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1.51 | Keyless entry pad |
| 2.87 | Battery backup |
| 3.44 | Upgraded remote control |
| 4.03 | Upgraded wall-mounted control station |
| 4.12 | Smartphone operable |
| 5.03 | Home automation |

up,” says a Texas dealer. “But the larger ticket can then scare away the customer.”

In 2002, Amarr CEO Richard Brenner published a story in this magazine on upselling. He wrote, “A key factor is to offer

“We use upgraded doors in all of our advertising, so customers come in asking for these types of doors first,” states a Minnesota dealer. “We start with an insulated carriage house door and see where the conversation goes.”

Advertising From the Top Down

The starting point of your sales conversation with your customer is not necessarily your face-to-face talk. It starts with your advertising. Yes, promoting a cheap price may get some customers in the door, and you might successfully upgrade them from there. But some dealers prefer to advertise only the best products.

Closing Comments

Upselling is an important issue for the garage door industry. Since professional sales training is lacking in our industry, many dealers are simply not equipped with higher-level sales skills that educate the customer and elevate the conversation.

Many dealers complain that most customers simply want the lowest price. But is this really true, or are dealers just making excuses for their lack of upselling skills?

“The person you think can’t afford an upgrade is the one who normally buys it,” counsels an Australia dealer who responded to our survey.

“Most of our customers are not shopping for the lowest price,” declares Robert Novak of Michigan City (Ind.) Garage Door. “What they really want is the most bang for their buck.”

“Anyone can sell a low price,” wrote Richard Brenner in 2002. “But it takes a skilled salesperson to sell quality and value.”

We hope this article helps you upgrade your selling skills. If you do, your business will benefit, your customers will benefit, and our entire industry will be raised to a higher level. ■

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