

Selling the Upscale Experience

Almost a year ago this column featured the topic of business plan fitness. I offered advice on planning well and being ready and nimble to run your business effectively so you could focus more on selling.

How did you do? Did you do anything? I'm sure that you managed your business, sold lots of great jobs, hired some new employees, attended tradeshows, tried new products, and repaired your van fleet—these are the basics. But what did you do differently in 2006 than in previous years dedicated to building a better selling environment?

Who does the selling at your company? The people who do the most should have been the first stop for you. Ask them what they did to enhance the selling experience for the customer. Yes, that's right, selling is for the customer. And creating a great experience for the customer during the sales process is a better "closer" than price, product, and features.

The business of selling beautiful home theaters sets itself apart from the business of selling conventional products and services. Products, features, and price dominate the sale in the conventional world. Experience is the differentiator for the home theater seller. Experience designing and selling

home entertainment systems is essential. Providing a great experience for the customer is nothing less than unacceptable.

Today's customer is seeking, more than ever, to do business with a company that knows this. An electronic systems contractor (ESC) is the right kind of business to be extra savvy in this area. You are selling an upscale experience. Whether your client is simply up for a few rooms of speakers with volume controls or a highly integrated home and custom-designed theater, each is making a luxury purchase. Your job is to provide them with a luxurious experience.

Within your business, you must create a process by which all of your employees, especially those that touch the customer, are hip to the notion of luxurious experiences. If they are not, you will be challenged to succeed with your future customers.

Customers today are experiencing speed and service in most transactions in their lives. Internet purchasing for many items is speedy and convenient. On the other hand, a friendly smile, patient attention, and a trust-building experience should always greet the customer who shops in person for a new car, clothing or other pleasure product. This process is all

about service and developing a repeat sales opportunity for the future.

So, how do you ensure that you can achieve and maintain this for your business? Review your time planning. Do this for your installation teams. Do you know how efficient they really are? It is all about properly tracking the man-hours required to prepare, arrive, work, depart, wrap-up, and be ready for the next day. If you improve your efficiency on the job, and if you have a solid day closing and day starting process, you will have a more organized business and happier customers. Why? Because your teams will arrive prepared, happy, and ready to work, and your customers will experience this. They will love you. Back at the office, you will be happier because you will know that your business' day has started on time and your people are happy out there. There is no substitute for happy, hard-working people who reflect this to your customers.

"So," you ask, "how does this element of running an efficient day, having happy employees, and creating great customer experiences through your work relate to a business plan?" Very simple: without these things in place, no amount of detail, strategy, tactics, fiscal metrics, planning, and cash-flow analy-



sis will mean much without the right frame of mind in your business to execute on it. And your competitors who this morning are rolling clean vans on time with "ready-to-go and happy guys" will be ahead of you for creating great customer experiences that day.

Wrap up your day as often as you can with your entire team. Have a little fun to bust up the tensions that arise even on good days in well-organized businesses. Who had a really great experience on their job today? Share it with everyone. Maybe it's something funny that happened, either with your people or with the client. Also, get it out on the table when something negative happened during the day. If everyone hears about it, chances are there's a solution. At the very least someone got something off their chest and can go home a little bit saner. And they'll start the next day in a better frame of mind.

Great customer experiences start with your internal employees and that should be your number-one goal in your business plan.

Buzz Delano (buzz@delanoassociates.com) is an industry consultant focused on sales management, growth strategies, new market plans, customer service, and strategic planning for manufacturers.

MANAGEMENT MODULE

New Project Management Book Added to Series

VERO BEACH, FL—Thomas Delmar Learning has published *Residential Integrator's Project Management* by Todd B. Adams, which lays a solid foundation for understanding project management as it relates to custom installation and systems inte-

gration. From operations turnover to document review and final project schedules, the guide breaks planning down into basic steps. The book features an included CD with a case study, sample forms and letters, and templates to aid in writing



client proposals. All told the book and CD represent hundreds of hours of research and years of experience in the industry. The text is the third book in Thomson Delmar Learning's Residential Integrator's Series. Visit www.DIpartner.com.