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Letter from the Executive

By Tom Wessner,

Hello Friends,

Well, the summer was good while it lasted. We were busy, and we trust that you were as well. But just because the weather is cooling down, it doesn't mean that our schedules – or yours – are any less crowded.

In fact, right now at ACCA-WPA, we're busy focusing on *you* and what we can do to make your ACCA membership even more valuable.

We hope you're doing the same with the customers you just spent the summer working so hard to get.

ACCA is just as dedicated to helping you keep your customers as you are to getting them. That's why we offer specific tips and tools to help you weather the "slow" season. In fact, this whole issue is dedicated to protecting your investment in your customers. Let us know what else we can do to serve you better!

Tom Wessner
ACCA-WPA
President

Marketing

Customer Retention Profits

By Adams Hudson

Contractors pour most of their marketing money in search of an elusive goal: More customers. This is, after all, marketing's job right? Well, yes and no. (Don't you just love vagaries from self-appointed marketing experts?)

The truth is that marketing's job is to attract, acquire, and *retain* paying customers. It's that last part that contractors overwhelmingly underestimate. In fact – you spend \$275-\$325 just to get a customer. I've read every study related to this issue and that is the consistent range in every one of them. So if you service them only once, there's an excellent chance you lost money on them. Yet the real shocker is that the average contractor spends less than \$40 in 3 years to keep them!

This is why I scream – I mean strongly suggest – to my clients to establish new standards in customer retention.

- **Set Customer Standards.** Put figures on your customer service just like your other business systems. How long does it take to handle a \$100 complaint? A \$1000 complaint? Who handles each? Do you have customer priority levels? Who gets a "Happy Call", a gift certificate, and a newsletter? Have a system of service that won't fail you.
- **Satisfaction comparison.** Shop your competition! Face it, other companies may handle an issue better than you do and customers may love it! You'll never know unless you find out. Have an employee's spouse stay home one day and take estimates.
- **Regular contact.** This is essential. Sending only sales messages makes your relationship a shallow obligation. Staying in touch assures a higher "top of mind" rating with customers. Regular newsletters (2-4 times a year are best.)
- **Customer Commitment.** This includes satisfaction training, better guarantees, and a written statement of what customer satisfaction means is at least distributed to your employees and at most published on all your customer correspondence.
- **Customer satisfaction measurement.** Either as a random call, or a "bounce back" card on your satisfaction survey. Simply ask: How did we rate in these areas? How can we improve? What other services could we offer? Were we clean, neat, orderly, polite, etc?

Adams Hudson is ACCA's National Marketing Partner. You can request his free marketing ezine and free marketing reports by emailing FreeACCAstuff@hudsonink.com.

If You Want Sales, Shut Up

Listening to your customers is a necessary component to success. It is not always an easy thing to do. It is not a passive event; it requires active concentration and focus. Not listening properly can have disastrous results that are subject to a very much unwanted domino pattern – loss of sales, referrals, and revenue.

So what do you need to do to be a good listener?

1. **Prepare** – A prepared listener has more than just a pencil and paper in front of them. They have all their tools ready; key points to questions; knowledge of your company products and services; knowledge of the customer with whom they're speaking; knowledge of your company policies and procedures.
2. **Focus** – Nothing else is happening except the conversation you are having with your customer. Block out distractions such as noise, fears, and yes, even your own personal problems. Your customer will hear in your voice that you are focused on them and only them.
3. **Respond** – Let your customer know that you are actively listening by periodically replying with a “yes” or “I understand”, and so on. It will make you seem more personal to them rather than like a script you might be reading from.
4. **Don't Be a “Talker”** – How can you ‘learn’ about your customer and his or her needs if you are doing all the talking? Don't interrupt either – that's just plain rude. You were given *two ears* and *one mouth*...
5. **Write It Down** – Take notes during your conversation. Certain key points must be written down to help you remember what you have spoken about. Note taking allows you to free your mind so you can concentrate on your customers' motives.
6. **Avoid “Mental Combat”** – Arguing with a customer is a guaranteed loss over the long term. If you allow a customer to irritate you, even mental arguing will show up in your attitude and tone-of-voice.
7. **Remember to “Read between the Lines”** – Although words may convey the thought, tone-of-voice often conveys the meaning. Be aware that a customer may say one thing but mean another.

“I Wonder if ACCA Has That for Me?”

Need some training this fall? ACCA has officially opened registration for Contracting Week being held October 18 - 21 in Nashville, Tennessee.

For the second year, ACCA is bringing together four unique learning events in one location over four days. By holding these events at the same time, it allows contractors in a number of fields to come together for specialized training and networking. Learn more at www.contractingweek.com.

Yeah. ACCA has that for you.

SmartWords

“Profit in business comes from repeat customers, customers that boast about your project or service, and that bring friends with them.”

W. Edwards Deming

Product Spotlight

Manual D: Residential Duct Systems

The newly released Manual D has been revised to include:

- Expanded VAV guidance, with detailed examples.
- Impacts of excess length, sag & compression in flexible ducts.
- New equivalent length values for flex duct junction boxes.

Get your new Manual D right now at www.acca.org/store.

ACCA Benefit Highlight

HomeWords: Your Customer Retention Program

One of the most effective, cost-efficient ways to communicate with your customers is through the ACCA *HomeWords* newsletter program. *HomeWords* is filled with informative, entertaining, and sales-building newsletters that customer read and enjoy. It is "season specific" and contains specially created "ads" for you to insert, along with your company logos and contact info for a custom look.

HomeWords is produced exclusively for ACCA members from the expert marketers at Hudson Ink. To order a free sample issue of *HomeWords*, email FreeACCAstuff@hudsonink.com.

The Art of Management

6 Things Salespeople Should Do So They Don't *Become* Turnovers

Yes, we're turning the tables on your poor, unrecognized, underpaid salespeople. It's called Taking Responsibility and most salespeople's personalities have a hard time with this one. Here's how to overcome a poor selling pattern:

1. **Garbage in equals garbage out.** Feed your mind quality material and quit hanging out at the parts counter complaining about your boss. It's not his fault if you can't close qualified leads.
2. **Speak No Evil.** Blaming bad luck or a string of bad situations changes nothing for the better. Complaints, gossip, and wild speculation about doomsday is poison for the soul.
3. **Associate with winners.** In stark contrast to the above, imagine yourself surrounded by good-natured successful people with superior ethics. You know this affects you positively.
4. **Control your emotions.** Anger is inevitable, but look at it as a *choice*. Just like irritation, worry, anxiety... we *choose* these things. Choose NOT to choose them, but confront the source of them.
5. **Be a goal getter.** Salespeople too often live from sale to sale, never glimpsing the possibility of long-term success through goal setting.

List out your problem areas. Be honest. Some areas are not as strong as you'd like. Identify them and put ONE specific step you could take to improve that area. Your mind will find a way to overcome it.

Rule Breaking 101

"The weather dictates the success of your business."

False: Sure, the weather impacts and influences your business – but *you* dictate your success. That means thinking creatively to outsmart your competition and turning "slow" times into money makers.

News Flash

The Latest from
ACCA National
Comfort University
Your 24/7 HVACR
Learning Center

Most successful contractors know the importance of a well-educated workforce. From technicians to middle management to the owners themselves, it's impossible to advance and improve without investing in useful education.

ACCA offers extensive educational opportunities for the HVACR industry, centered on commitment to excellence. And now we offer ComfortU, a dynamic learning portal, offering a wide variety of educational programs you can put to use in your company's operations.

CU is a totally innovative program, unlike anything else available in our industry. It offers two major programs – CU Webinars, for all-inclusive on-demand viewing; and, CU Courses, which offers individual courses and certifications.

You can learn more at:
<https://www.acca.org/education/online>