

PWNA Article for Cleaner Times March 2010

Do You Want Fries With That?

Good economy or bad, up selling can mean the difference between surviving and thriving

By Terri Perrin

The food services industry was one of the first to unabashedly embrace the idea of up-selling services to increase profits. Whether you are just grabbing a burger at a drive-thru or enjoying a fine dining experience, you are always encouraged to spend more. Do you want tap or bottled water? Want some pie with that coffee? Anyone for dessert?

Whether you opt for that extra food item or not, you can learn from this proven sales strategy. Up selling *is* something you can easily integrate in the power washing business when you view your services as an 'a la carte' menu.

According to several long-standing Power Washers of North America (PWNA) members, your existing services and customer base is the best place to start.

Mike Hinderliter, SteamAway, Forth Worth, Texas, not only views his service offerings as a 'menu,' he even offers daily specials!

"When you sell services 'al la carte' you can, for example, offer to clean truck windows at half price one day and feature an Armoral tire treatment the next," explains Hinderliter. "During these tough economic times, it is always easier to get more work from an existing client than it is to get a new one. More choice means better service. It is something I know my clients appreciate."

"Whether it is a new prospect or a loyal client, we always approach a job site with our eyes wide open," explains Paul Horsley, Scotts Pressure Wash, Calgary, Alberta. "You may have been called in to provide a quote on power washing the parking lot or sidewalk... but don't overlook the obvious! Does the awning need cleaning? Is there graffiti on the walls or fence? Are the dumpsters a mess? Recognize that there are always opportunities to up-sell if you look for them. And, the best thing about up selling is that you can usually do the extra work with all of the same tools and products you already have on your trucks. The only 'extra' is really the effort!"

Horsley stresses the importance of sales people making appointments for job quotes. Never quote jobs over the phone! Not only will you miss up-selling opportunities, mistakes can be costly! Sales people should be also encouraged to visit a site before the scheduled appointment time. They can make notes and observations about other ways they could help that particular customer, as well as consider what services they could offer to adjacent businesses. Making this extra investment of time could result in a \$500 job prospect turning into \$1000 or more. In addition to the added revenue, you develop increased customer satisfaction by pointing out that cleaning several different areas of the property at once saves time and money.

You have to be careful, however, that you don't let technicians get caught up in doing 'on demand' extras for customers warns Mike Hilborn, Roof-to-Deck Restoration, St. Paul, Minnesota. The up-sell

needs to take pace when the quote is being written up, not when you have men and equipment on site. To operate profitably, you need to make a tight schedule and stick to it.

“You can also add new services,” says Dan Galvin, East Coast Power Washing, Plymouth, Massachusetts. “Many power wash contractors who started out doing flat surface cleaning have added line painting. I specialize in fleet washing but have recently expanded to include the cabs and cargo boxes for delivery trucks and cargo vans.”

Eric Clark, Details Pressure Wash Services, Kennebunk, Maine, agrees that diversity is key. He has noted an ever-increasing need to provide wash water recovery services for various industries and is expanding into that area. And, since hot water not only cleans surfaces, it melts ice; he has successfully tapped into the market for de-icing roofs on homes and commercial properties.

“My problem is not *identifying* new business ventures,” laughs Clark. “My problem is *finding the time* to start working on them. Every time I drive down the street I see new opportunities for my power washing company!”

Hinderliter takes the prospect of diversification even further. His company focuses on wood restoration from April through October. To keep employees on the payroll during what would traditionally be a season slow-down he gets into the Christmas spirit!

“We design, install and take down Christmas light displays for shopping centres, hotels, businesses and homes,” says Hinderliter. “Our customers essentially ‘rent’ the lights from us. I own and store the lights in the off season.”

Steve James, The Stain Shop, Linden, Michigan, says there are many extra services are a natural fit with pressure washing.

“If you are there to clean and then seal the wooden deck, why not have the customer consider having their cement driveway or patio with paving stones done as well” asks James. “Chances are good that they didn’t even know that the other surfaces could be cleaned and they will welcome the suggestion. It is a matter of educating the customer.”

The most important thing to remember is that our customers are looking for someone that they can trust to do good work. Once you build that trust, up selling makes dollars and sense.

SIDEBAR

Additional Up-Selling Tips

Put Your Website to Work

Think of it as an employee who works 24/7, never takes a holiday or calls in sick! Be sure to list all of your services here. Keep it updated and fresh.

Ask for Referrals!

Encourage customers to tell friends and family about the great work that you do. *Always* ask a new customer how they heard about you. And *always* thank the person who referred you. Call them personally or send an email with a \$25 or \$50 off coupon for their next power washing service.

Don't Over-sell Yourself

You may do such a great job power washing and staining a deck that the customer asks you to do something you can't do -- like paint her kitchen. Know when to say no! Instead, refer her to someone in your community who can do the job well. Honesty is always appreciated! Recognize that saying "yes" to something totally different could be a recipe for failure.

Align Yourself with a Realtor

Create a 'Curb Appeal' package for homes that includes gutters, roof, driveway, deck, sidewalks and siding. Work with realtors who could offer this spruce-up package to owners of newly listed or recently purchased homes. Both commercial and residential realtors can be a great referral source.