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Scroll down to the next page for Article.

What Your Customers Don't Know Is Killing You

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Have you ever discovered that one of your customers used someone else for a service you provide? When you asked them “Why didn't you call us?”, did you hear those horrible six words: “I didn't know you did that?”

The fact is, what your customers don't know is killing you. It sucks money out of your company, undermines profitability and reduces your closing rates and margins. Unfortunately, most of you do far too little to keep them informed.

We've interviewed thousands of customers of home comfort companies. Here are the three critical problems most of you face.

- 1) Too many customers don't realize all the things you sell.** They think you service only one brand of equipment. Some don't even realize you do both heating and air conditioning. They don't know you can do zoning, or duct cleaning, or indoor air quality, or fireplaces, etc.
- 2) They don't know there are solutions to their comfort problems.** Maybe they have an old house and didn't realize you could put a/c in. They have allergies but didn't know IAQ equipment could help. They want to avoid breakdowns, but don't realize how valuable an annual tune-up is. If they don't realize, they won't call.
- 3) They don't understand the difference between you and other companies.** To the average Joe, most HVAC contractors look the same. You have similar trucks, similar ads, sell similar products. They don't realize how much can go wrong if the installation isn't done right, or if the techs aren't trained properly, or if you don't stock enough parts, etc.

Of all the differences, this is the biggest shame. Because ultimately, it is the key to being able to charge more, close faster, sell more—you name it. And in a world where you need to compete against manufacturers, utilities, consolidators, etc., communicating your differences is critical to survival.

Communicate and win

Traditionally, contractors have done a poor job of communicating with customers. But that's changing, perhaps because of the increased competition I just alluded to.

Many of you are starting to send newsletters because they give you an opportunity to hit the three major challenges at once, and are therefore very cost-effective. Sure enough, if you do them right, you can build your relationships and increase trust, showcase your “value-added” differences, educate people about the things you sell, and generate leads.

Unfortunately, most companies do a poor job with them, including some of the “professional” newsletter providers. They often look like crap, are boring and self-serving, come out too infrequently to have any real impact, lack strategy, or are too general to give customers a real feel for your company. As a result, they waste lots of opportunity. Bottom line? Do them right, or save your money.

Beyond newsletters, you should identify other opportunities to communicate and educate. These include your tune-up and service plan solicitations, your forms, feedback cards, etc.

The more you help your prospects understand your value, products and services, the more you win. It's that simple. Look at your own marketing and see how well you are telling your story. If your walk is better than your talk, it's time you talked to us.