

Follow Up Leads

Written by Steve Marr
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Sometimes when I step in to see a prospective customer or make an initial phone call, the business is closed. If I don't follow up, I've lost a potential customer. What I have learned over the years about following up leads, I now use in a damage restoration business I have an interest in. When a customer calls because a pipe break caused their living room ceiling to collapse, they're usually anxious to sign the work order and have our company immediately mitigate the problem. Unfortunately, it's not always as simple as that. It requires working with property managers, insurance agents, and sometimes referred businesses.

On two occasions after visiting an insurance agent, we generated a referral to begin the work within 24 hours. It is common for such referrals to take 6 to 12 months. In the meantime, we followed up the referred partner with postcards, email, or a phone call. These activities don't simply happen. They are a part of an orderly sales and marketing process which is partly automated allowing myself and others to follow up consistently.

In other circumstances, a customer may call with a mold problem which we investigate and propose a solution to eradicate the unpleasant mold. We don't simply leave the proposal with the customers and walk away, waiting for the customer to call us back. We know we may need to follow up with the customer several times to determine if they want us to do the work. Even when we encounter objections in our follow up, I welcome them. Objections give us an opportunity to remove obstacles from the customer's mind and move them toward signing a work order with our firm.

I remember when dad took me with him when he was shopping for cars. He was looking one over, chatted with the salesperson and then left the dealership. One of the first things my dad told me was that the salesperson didn't get my name or contact information. He had no way of following up to see if I'd like to buy the car. My dad didn't return to that dealership. He purchased a vehicle from a different dealership.

Amazon follows up relentlessly. I've ordered groceries for store pick up. As a result, they constantly send me weekly specials. An effective dentist or physical therapist will send reminders and follow-up to keep customers engaged or re-generate them as customers. In almost every business, some type of follow up is crucial. If we are willing to spend a lot of effort

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and money to get the first customer contact, we need to drive that contact into a sale whenever possible.

King Solomon wrote, "Better is the end of a thing than its beginning." (Ecclesiastes 7:8, ESV) Similarly, an initial contact with a customer is just the beginning of a relationship. It takes follow up to get them to the end with a sale. Beginnings are good; but an effective end is even better.