

# Stop Selling Water Treatment Systems

By Dale Filhaber

It's time to stop selling water treatment systems and consider changing your approach. Are you a salesperson or a consultant? There is a huge difference between the two techniques. If your basic goal is to close the deal and move on to the next job, you are a salesperson, which means you are probably leaving money on the table. A consultant goes far above simply closing the deal. He or she works closely with customers to provide guidance, set goals, deal with expectations, implement a plan and monitor its results. A consultant develops rapport, advises and cultivates a relationship. When we talk about the lifetime value of a customer, which technique do you think brings in a higher ROI?

The majority of dealers go out of their way to make sure their customers get the best possible system for their needs. There are, however, dealers who have come under fire for their sales techniques. It's really unfortunate that there are some bad apples out there who have given the rest of the industry a bad rap, which causes the public to remain skeptical. How do we change communal perception? We move from being salespeople to becoming consultants.

Let's take a page out of the *Certified Financial Planner Board of Professional Standards* playbook and go through the stages that a CFP uses when working with a client.

## **Establishing and setting goals**

Is your prospect's goal saving money, preserving the environment, reducing rust, softening their tap water for bathing or providing quality water for their children to drink?

## **Gathering relevant information**

Test the water using your professional testing equipment. Find out about the family members. Is anyone ill in the family? Are there children; babies in the family? What about teenage girls who wash their hair every day? What does the outside of the home look like—do you see rust or discoloration? Are there pets in the family? What are the laundry requirements? Will the prospect share their water or power bills?

## **Analyzing and evaluating data**

It's all about the water test—what does it tell us? What's the history of the neighborhood? What are the prospect's hot buttons?

## **Developing and recommending a plan**

A consultant will present several options to the client based on the results of the data. Remember, a consultant is not the decision-maker, but someone whose job is to educate and clarify all the features, requirements, costs and alternatives so that the client can make an informed decision about the system that is best for him/his family.

## **Implementing the recommendations**

A consultant will ensure that the installation goes smoothly and the customer is comfortable with the system. A consultant will make sure the customer is trained in its use.

## **Monitoring the plan**

A consultant will follow up with the customer to make sure they are happy with the installation and understand how everything works. Do they need soap, salt or other supplies? Do you have them in your electronic tickler file for periodic check-ins? Did you ask for a referral? Can you post their positive review on your Facebook page?

While I realize that water professionals are not the same as CFPs, this highly professional approach lends itself to all kinds of sales efforts. Dealers who are following a process like this are on the right track to nurturing a long-term relationship with their customers, thus ensuring a high lifetime value. Dealers who aren't might want to consider rethinking their current process because, bottom line, following a professional sales process like this will ensure a higher ROI.

## **Conclusion**

Why am I, a marketing maven, writing about this? All the marketing in the world won't generate dollars if customers feel they are being sold on rather than guided through a process. Marketing is an investment and there is nothing worse than feeling you've wasted your time and money. In the long run, a consultative approach will bring in far more dollars than simply selling to make the numbers. So, stop selling systems and start consulting. As a result, your dealership will get rave reviews from customers and be well-positioned as the leading water quality provider in your area.

## **About the author**

◆ Dale 'DataDale' Filhaber is President of Dataman Group Direct, a Florida-based direct marketing company founded in 1981. She is an author, lecturer and Listologist. In the past 25+ years, Filhaber has trained many water quality dealers in direct marketing and lead generation techniques, ranging from direct mail to telemarketing to social media. In the water industry, she has published articles in multiple industry magazines, is the author of *Pure Water Profits* (a bi-weekly blog on marketing) and recently participated in the webinar *Perfecting the in-Home Sale*. Filhaber is also a frequent guest lecturer at the annual WQA Aquatech conference.

