

# Avoid the Sales Slump

By Matt Palmersten

Increasing sales in today's competitive residential market

In today's residential water treatment market, competition for customers is becoming fiercer. It is a challenge to stay ahead of the competition. In the past, the strategy was to get in front of as many people as possible and hope to close on percentages. In today's world, however, that strategy is not only ineffective, but unrealistic. So, how can you increase sales and market share in today's competitive world of residential water treatment?

## Market Presence

Consider how your customers find you. Sure, you can do the same old, same old: ads in the Yellow Pages, flyers, etc. But the Internet is one of the most powerful tools that has evolved over the past couple decades, and it also has created more competition for all markets than ever before.

This means you could be competing not only with the companies in your immediate area, but also others across the country

and even around the world. The key is to make sure your company is the natural choice.

It all comes down to your market presence—that is what keeps you in business. You need to make sure you are seen as the go-to solution for your customers' water concerns.

The first step is to create an Internet presence. Regardless of whether or not you like the Internet, it is here to stay, and your business needs to be on it. In today's market, if you do not have an easy-to-navigate and informative website, your company might as

well not exist. You also can improve your company's chances of ranking well in Web searches by being active on social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, etc.) and ensuring that your website is optimized for search engines.

Another way to get your company in front of potential customers is through community involvement. Participate in events that support your city, county or state, such as the local chamber of commerce, charities, community celebrations and festivals. Try sponsoring an event, forming sports teams under your company name, participating in fundraisers or other community activities, or sponsoring a float in the next town parade.

Give your business a face and voice to make it stand out. Also, keep in mind that the "buy local" movement is gaining ground in many areas. The key is to keep yourself in front of your customers in a meaningful way.

## Sales Training

One thing we often fail to consider is continuous training for employees. Your employees probably went through training when they were first hired, but it cannot stop there—it should go on throughout their careers.

This does not necessarily mean a big expense to you. If you ask them, your suppliers should be more than willing to help train your team on how to sell, use, install and fix their products. Also, supplier training could help you discover new products to address issues you have experienced, or even introduce you to a product that could create a new revenue stream for your business.

## Sales Approach

The correct sales approach is something that has been debated for centuries and will only continue to be debated in the future. It varies hugely depending on whom you ask and what part of the world you are in.

A method that works for me is simple: Educate your customers. Teach them about your products and explain how they will help address their

Market Presence

Training Program

Sales Approach

Product Offerings

particular water concerns. Customers want to know what they are buying and why they are buying it. The level of detail in your explanation depends completely on the customer, but you can apply this method to any sale.

When dealing with residential water treatment, the explanation can be fairly straightforward. There are four parts to a residential treatment system: filtration, softening, disinfection and point-of-use. You can talk about each part whether the water comes from a municipal source or a well.

Why should you talk about all those things when the customer only needs a softener? Well, how can you hope to know what your customer needs if your customer does not even know?

Even though the water analysis may say that hardness is the main issue, once the customers know all the options and how different technologies can work together to provide a complete water solution, they may decide it would be a good idea to include carbon filtration for taste, an ultraviolet disinfection system for peace of mind against biological contaminants, and a reverse osmosis system for the sink. But if they do not know why they might need different solutions, they probably will not ask for them because they will not know to ask for them.

By teaching your customers about all the products that can address their water concerns, you not only empower them to make educated choices about water safety, but you also develop a better relationship with them. They will see you as a trusted expert rather than simply a supplier.

### Product Offering

If you often decide not to carry certain products because you do not think there is a demand for them in your area, you may be making a mistake. You cannot know what your customers really need if you are not making all of the options available to them.

Unless your customers shop online, their purchases depend entirely on what you have to offer. This ties back to educating your customers. If you do not show your customers all of the options, they may never know they want or need them. Ensuring that a full product offering is available for your customers opens up more sales opportunities.

The moral of the story is, do not give up on a product simply because you do not see a demand for it. You could actually help create the demand simply through education and making the product available.

While these tips may help increase

your market presence and boost sales, reading about them is not enough. You have to commit to taking action, and that could mean a significant shift in how you do business. Your market presence, training program, sales approach and product offerings are things that

need to be reviewed and reevaluated regularly, but only you can make the changes happen. Make the commitment and watch how sales evolve. *wqp*

Matt Palmersten, CWS-IV, is regional sales manager for VIQUA, a Trojan

Technologies Co. Palmersten can be reached at [mpalmersten@viqua.com](mailto:mpalmersten@viqua.com) or 651.330.5173.

For more information on this subject write in 1001 on this issue's reader service card.

## Now you can improve filter performance in POE and POU systems.

### Only patented KDF® Process Media deliver all of these benefits:

- Remove chlorine, iron, hydrogen sulfide and heavy metals from water
- Control scale, bacteria and algae
- Extend the life and improve the performance of GAC, RO and IX filtration systems
- Eliminate the need for expensive silver impregnated carbon and pesticide registration hassles
- Reduced material requirements result in more compact and more economical water treatment systems
- KDF Process Media contain no chemicals and are 100% recyclable
- Find out more at [www.kdfft.com](http://www.kdfft.com)

Send for free KDF POU & POE brochures.



### Solutions for economical clean water.™

1500 KDF Drive • Three Rivers, Michigan 49093-9287  
Toll-free: 1-800-437-2745 • Phone: 1-269-273-3300  
Fax: 1-269-273-4400  
E-mail: [info@kdfft.com](mailto:info@kdfft.com) • Web: [www.kdfft.com](http://www.kdfft.com)

