



More Than Just Great Monitoring

Offering More Than Just Great Monitoring

In years past, ("Back in the day"), a third party monitoring facility only had one goal; to monitor a dealer's accounts in an accurate and efficient manner.

Life was also simpler for the dealer; "word of mouth" generated the leads, sales and referrals.

He'd go into a home to hard wire his control panel and peripherals as well as foil the windows. Then he would burn a prom and finally, collect his payment. Life was easy.

As the years progressed, the alarm dealer has had to evolve. Manufacturers developed better alarm panels that featured more "stuff". The accompanying peripherals were more efficient and revolutionary that required a new type of expertise. Land lines, were, will be/are ancient history. "Cellular, internet, cloud, verification and mobile pers", are the new buzz words and all the rage. The need to grow with the times took an urgency commiserate with the need to compete with the conglomerates that bombarded the customer with commercials and ads to "get the lead and turn it into a sale".

An alarm dealer who once only needed his tool bag, wire and a drill, all of a sudden had to know a whole lot more to do his trade. The training included: Up/Down loading alarm panels, cellular back up or a total communication solution such as Total Connect, Connect 24 or Alarm.com. This training involved an investment in time and money that few could comfortably afford. In some states, the dealer also needed an "Alarm License".

The manufacturers, distributors and alarm associations have done an amazing job helping the alarm dealer overcome speed bumps in the road by hold training sessions for product and licensing. Dealers have had to immerse themselves into all this new information and reinvent themselves. The end result is a dealer better suited to handle our changing industry.

More is still needed. What it comes down to involves the necessary "evil" of pursuing a sale. The search for customers must become an expected part of the business protocol. Having all this knowledge and nowhere to utilize it creates the real issue. The competition is steep and a business that wants to succeed must actively court the potential customer. The phone is not going to ring by itself. You need to make the phone ring by starting the sales process so you can practice your trade.

We've always been great installers. Monitoring stations have always been up to the task. Manufacturers continue to develop "state of the art" product. Today that is not enough for the alarm installer, the central station or the manufacturer.

The alarm dealer has an array of "marketing" tools he needs to learn how to use. He can't rely on "word of mouth" for his next meal. He needs to incorporate into his selling bag of tricks the programs and new technology that will reach his potential customer's "hot button". He needs to show would-be clients that he's up to the task. It is essential to convince them he can offer all the "things" that AT&T, ADT and Cable companies are



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advertising, and more. He's got the "local" not global advantage. People would rather do business with a local company if they knew there was a comparable choice. In emergencies, it is always better to feel like a person instead of an account number.

The problem is that the ability to market your business with the different vehicles available is not easy.

What do you choose? There are a variety of approaches (Your choices include: referrals, website, mailers, ads, telemarketing, a door knocking campaign as well as mall shows). Each one of these methods can work if done correctly and circumstances are optimal. You can't rely on one marketing vehicle to get the word out. Each one of these marketing vehicles is a science unto itself. It's very difficult to master one, let alone all. You don't have to. After every sales/marketing seminar I have attended, I've always come away with something new or different that I can put into my presentation that makes me a better sales/marketing person. The alarm dealer needs to do the same. Whether in product training, sales or marketing, if you learn one "thing" and incorporate it into your presentation or marketing and you get one more sale per week, you are expanding your business. Implementing these new strategies will separate you from the majority of alarm dealers who just sit and wait.

This is about baby steps. Easing into this new frontier of marketing and sales; not jumping head first into "doing it all". You need to formulate a multidimensional /faceted approach. You can't get the appointment unless you set yourself apart. You can't sell if you don't get into the

home. The bigger companies utilize large budgets to offer free items or services that really aren't free. They become household words representing the industry by barraging the potential customer with commercials evoking fear and insecurity. You have to find your path by seeking the expertise of experienced professionals in the industry and investing in tomorrow. You must never be satisfied with the living you have today. As we all know, nothing lasts forever.

There are two intangibles you must realize in the selling process. You already know the cost of materials and labor. What you don't know and need to figure out is what constitutes "overhead". Besides rent, utilities and insurance, there is lead generation which is essential. Cost of a sale is something that most Alarm Companies don't calculate into their projections. The costs fluctuate but the need is consistent.

That's why you go to sales and marketing seminars: to learn how it's done.

What I have learned in my many years in the fire and security arena is that you, the alarm dealer, are the product. You see; you are selling you. When a customer invites you into his home, he's buying you; the acknowledged expert. He expects that you will install the proper product. He expects you to have waded through the minutia of all the products to select what is best for his home. He trusts in the job you will do, the cost, and the quality. Yes there are associations with corporate names out there that will lend to your credibility but they won't get you in the door. Manufacturers offer a good product, but at the end of the day, the customer



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is buying you and what you are offering. It is your job as the acknowledged expert to provide the “right” alarm system for the customers’ needs.

Selling is a (science) process.

The customer has to like you (warm up)

You have to instill the need for Security.

You must show why you stand out (show why you are different).

Predict and then overcome any objections.

Most importantly, close the sale.

Whew! That’s a lot to take in. Most dealers don’t want to high pressure a potential customer. You don’t have to. Asking for the order is expected. Overcoming objections should be standard practice. Just like going to a product seminar, it is important to realize sales seminars are needed to hone the skills you need to expand business.

Selling tools are needed. No longer can you go into a home with a pad and pencil to do a quick walk around and leave a quote. The words “I’ll call you in a few days after you’ve reviewed the estimate.” don’t stand up to the amount of competition and the consumer’s inability to commit. These are hard times financially; “doing without” unleashes still another issue. The customer must be convinced to prioritize.

A presentation book/script is almost mandatory; especially if you have sales people working for you. You’d want them to follow a script so the “presentation” they give customers becomes rote. By this repetition you/they become more comfortable and therefore will be perceived by the potential customer as being relaxed, confident and professional.

Many years ago I wanted to get an estimate on new windows. At the time, my wife and I really could not afford the purchase. It was more of a fact-finding appointment than anything else. The salesman personalized the visit by complimenting a picture of our family. He warmed our hearts but telling us about his own three beautiful children. Then he began a well-rehearsed script that answered every question about windows even before we asked it. He touted the benefits of keeping the house warmer in a more cost-effective manner. At the end, he finished with his “big close”. “When can we start?” he said. My wife was so convinced that these windows would change our life, I had to fight to get the pen out of her hand. I learned about a good sale that day. I asked for the man’s card in the hopes of changing his career to security sales. I never let my wife hear a sales pitch again.

I’ve talked mostly about the alarm dealer because that where the process has to start. A monitoring station can’t monitor alarms that have not been installed; a manufacturer can’t sell product if the dealers do not have the demand. It’s not the duty of a monitoring center or a manufacturer to help the alarm dealer. Since they have more resources to enlighten/guide the alarm dealer, I believe it’s their obligation. It’s incumbent upon the central stations and manufacturers to assist dealers in becoming more proactive in marketing. Dealers must be given the tools to get more business. Having a “turnkey solution” for marketing programs is a prescription for success. Dealers don’t need to create these strategies; they need to implement them.

While most monitoring facilities offer the ability to monitor these new technologies that manufacturers are developing, they leave it to the alarm dealer to



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formulate and implement sales techniques. I believe we need to do more. A cohesive plan to help dealers compete with "the big boys" is essential for survival on every level.

Whether you agree with them or not... Dealer programs like; ADT have the ability to bring on an abundant number of alarm accounts in a relatively short period of time. Of course with the mass marketing of alarm systems there goes hand in hand a higher percentage of attrition. In reality this raises the cost of sale, so we've come full circle.

Obtaining more sales is imperative for growth. Keeping and building recurring revenue is how you make money and keep the cost of sale and lead acquisition manageable. If I didn't say it before, let me say it now. Referrals are the most basic and efficient way to keep your cost of lead acquisition down. After every sale,

every service, you and your employees should be asking for referrals. The implementation of a "handshake policy" where you call new customers within two weeks after installation to see if they are happy with the alarm system; or ask if they have any questions, will make you into a better company that satisfies customers.

**A happy customer will give you referrals.
An unhappy customer will give you agida (heartburn) and higher attrition.**

I don't claim to know it all; or even come close. Even today, I'm still learning. As the old adage says "when you're green you're growing; when you're ripe you rot." All I can tell you, as I look back at my career in the fire and burglar alarm industry; circa 1975, is that I've helped save a lot of lives, protected people and their valuables and helped dealers make money. I wake up every morning with a smile on my face knowing that we make a difference.



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