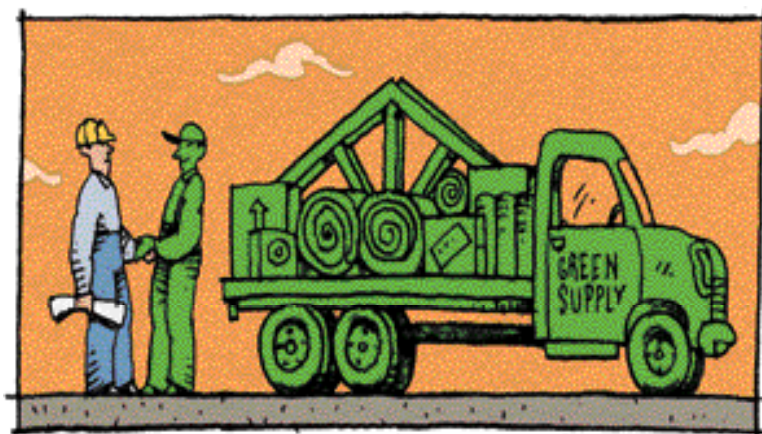


Don't Love Green? Sell It Anyway

If your builder customers care, show them how to use your products to sell homes. By Rick Davis



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Last month's NAHB National Green Building Conference served as a powerful reminder to sell green because it can make you lots of green, as in cash. But that green will come only if you know how to leverage this powerful and important trend.

Amazingly, many salespeople still regard the green building movement as an alarmist ploy designed by tree-huggers to scare consumers. Not only is this viewpoint shortsighted from a social perspective, it can cost you money in the long run.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, buildings in the United States account for nearly 40% of energy used and more than two-thirds of all electricity consumed. Therefore, the building industry plays a key role in managing environmental issues. More importantly, the industry provides a powerful long-term economic opportunity for salespeople who know how to leverage the economic advantages of green building.

During a meeting with a builder, I observed a salesman mocking the green movement. The builder, while agreeing he was not thrilled with the trend, reprimanded the salesman, pointing out that many of the builder's clients are very conscious of green building.

On another sales call, I watched a salesman investigate the builder's position on the issue. When he discovered it was a hot topic, the salesman presented a powerful story about minimizing waste. He provided resources to

educate the consumer, and a method for the builder promote a tight, eco-friendly home to his clients.

The first salesman was ignorant. The other was ready to inspire the builder about ways to enhance his sales process to consumers.

If you are not on the bandwagon, you are already behind. The 2008 International Builders' Show and the NAHB Green Building Conference have demonstrated that builders are listening to market demands.

You must be part of the green selling movement to achieve true Sales Leadership by understanding some of the key issues.

1. Energy Costs. With soaring oil and natural gas prices, even a homeowner who feels that global warming is a hoax will be concerned about long-term heating and cooling costs. Yet, many builders and product salespeople fail to make this issue a powerful selling point. Two organizations that I've encountered demonstrate the energy efficiency of their homes by providing thermal imagery that shows both the retention and loss of heat and cold as a result of a tightly sealed structure. Don't sell the short-term benefit, but instead promote the long-term costs your products will provide the builders' clients.

2. Environment. Sustainability is critical, even though many salespeople and builders don't have the same environmental concerns as their clients. Great Sales Leadership can be about promoting your perspective, but it's more powerful when you tap into the client's point of view. Be sure your builders have all information regarding the environmental benefits your products may offer, such as reduced VOC emissions during production, goods from recycled materials, ethical mining of materials and sustainable forestry, to name a few.

3. Sustainability. We are way past the point at which cutting down a tree should vilify us as an industry. Yet many builders are still unaware of the progress made by many self-regulating agencies within our industry. Educate yourself. Visit Web sites and share your knowledge with builders so they can increase their credibility during the sales process.

Take the time to educate yourself on the real benefits your products provide to consumers. Instead of pushing those benefits to the builders in trite, feature-benefit presentations, teach the builders how to sell the benefits to their clients. If you want to keep yourself on the leading edge of our industry, you must recognize that your job is not to sell your products, but is to help your builders sell theirs. ■