



## Prospecting for the Future

by Rick Davis

There is an old saying, “You can’t draw blood from a stone.” The significance of the adage is that you must accept the limitations of the world around you. Right now your business is suffering like every other business in the world, and, like every businessperson, you are probably trying to figure out ways in which you can outsmart your competition in the short term. The answer is that you may not be able to create a significant advantage in the short run, but that you might be able to establish a powerful long-term advantage.

The success of any campaign begins with early preparation long before the battles begin. In the business world, those who thrive tomorrow will certainly be those that planned well today. In order to create a plan, you must determine where your market opportunities will be six to 18 months in the future. Whether your focus is on the new construction market or the reroofing business, a planned approach to the future will yield powerful results. Here are three strategies that can help:

**1. Prospect now for the future.** It is abundantly clear to anyone that travels the country working with various construction supply companies and contractors that everyone is struggling to survive. Some have taken the proper cost-cutting measures already that will enable them to survive while others have not. Some have begun the prospecting campaign that will create success months down the road.

There are literally millions of households in need of roof repair and other remodeling projects that are being postponed due to lack of funds and insecurity about the future. This provides visionary companies the opportunity to identify clients that will be candidates for sales months down the road.

If you are in the business of remodeling, you should endeavor to uncover leads for potential clients that state a firm interest in future remodeling even while you try to find clients that have more immediate needs. In fact, while your sales staff is prospecting for instant sales gratification, each of your sales representatives should be vigilant about noting which prospects

are “clients of the future.” The “no” is often not “no,” but is instead “not now.” These leads are the precious gems of your future sales growth.

If you are in the business of new construction roofing, then the same is true. Your sales team should strive to maintain relationships with as many builders in the market that are candidates to survive the economic depression. Keep in mind that many of your competitors may not make it and builders will be looking for new contractors in both the short and long term.

**2. Build with your secondary products.** Too many roofing contractors get pigeonholed into the concept that they are installers of roofs. The most successful roofing contractors recognize that they are first and foremost contractors. If you discover a client that needs a product other than a roof, then be prepared to adapt. During this difficult time it may be easier to spread your organization vertically by selling more to each customer rather than horizontally by selling more customers.

**3. Manage information with a computerized database.** If you believe the assertion that your future is based on the leads you uncover today, then you must have a structured method of information manage-

ment. Newsletters, phone calls and other methods of personal touch will keep you foremost in your clients mind when they are ready to make a purchasing decision.

We have entered a time of scarcity when we must position ourselves properly for opportunities when they arise. If the three keys of real estate are location, location and location, then we can confidently assert that the three laws of selling are timing, timing and timing. Create relationships now in order to capitalize on the proper timing in the future. **R**

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