

Avoid These 5 Things to Grow Your Business

Gary Dayan | Sep 21, 2018

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Our goal in this industry should always be to serve as advocates for our clients. We're doing more than just a "job." In the construction and renovation industry, we're helping our client build a dream. And it's imperative that we set the right tone up front. The last thing you want to do is turn off potential clients because of what you said, or even how you said something.

In my role as project manager of a design-build firm, my goal is to make each client, homeowner, designer and all of my subs a part of our circle. A big part of that is being intentional about how we act and what we say. We inform, educate and aide in the process of helping them realize their vision.

Keeping those goals in mind, here are five behaviors and habits we try to avoid at all costs:

1. Avoid pushing a client into a decision

Stop "selling." But, if I stop selling won't I lose business?

Just the opposite.

Whenever we're at an appointment with a prospect, we focus on making them feel comfortable and welcoming them to work with us. If you're looking to build a good rapport, the last thing you want to do is rush or push a client into a decision if they are not actually ready to move forward. High-pressure sales tactics are phasing out in just about every industry. But it's especially important in ours. Anyone working on a building is helping bring a crucial vision to reality: whether it's a family home or a business venture. Nobody wants high-pressure people along for that ride.

Instead, our priorities are customer satisfaction and making them feel comfortable. Workers and partners are our next concern, as we need to have an engaged team that also thinks customer-first.

So, stop selling and start partnering with your customers. Create business alliances and build strong relationships. With that kind of mentality in every situation, the projects will come.

2. You can't say can't; you won't say won't

As an organization, we have a few words that we steer clear of. I've already written about one of them – the term "selling." We also try at all costs to eliminate these two words from our vocabulary when speaking to prospects and customers: "can't" and "won't."

Why avoid these two? First, starting a sales conversation in negative terms is a surefire way to get things moving down the wrong path. Remember, you want to build a lasting relationship. You want to be an advocate for them. If you're telling them right off the bat that you can't do X or won't do Y, it is going to give the impression that you are looking at this in a very transactional manner.

Saying "can't" or "won't" simply closes the door for you. And it opens the door for another pro who is willing to make it work for the client.

If a prospect asks you about something you've never done, you can always let them know you have resources and team members with a broad range of experience. And, if you're living out that mantra throughout your business, you should ideally have someone in your network to turn to for those creative and ambitious client projects.

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3. Avoid disturbing the client's environment

Once you've built the relationship and landed a project, you want to continue growing it. Part of that is to be conscious of your clients' environment and avoid disturbing it whenever possible.

When it comes to residential projects, we think of our clients' home and the way it should be treated much in the same way as if we were invited in as dinner guests. Having worked with many people in the industry, I've witnessed some in the trades who will travel through a client's home as if their mess and disturbance is not only anticipated but even accepted.

One thing's for sure: that kind of attitude will not go over well with most homeowners.

Clients don't necessarily know what is to be expected from the process. If we are working on their home, it is up to us to minimize the stress that our profession can bring to someone's personal space. Whether it's a home or an office environment, tread lightly. Realize that you are a guest. We should always be grateful that our clients let us into their world. After all, they are the reason we're in business.

4. Avoid withholding information

Transparency in construction is key. When working on a project, we've found that it is best in the long run to avoid withholding anything from clients.

Construction and renovation projects rarely come without any hiccups. There are a lot of moving parts, subs, tradesmen and other parties involved. There are tight deadlines. There is a lot of stress. And the last thing you want is for a client to become hostile or angry during the middle of a project, only adding more stress to it.

But here's the thing: If you're meeting with your clients regularly and keeping them up-to-date as best as you can about what you're discovering and where you are in the anticipated schedule, there's no real room for surprises. Barring natural disasters, you have everything covered and they should be in the loop. Sure, they may still be frustrated in moments. But, by remaining transparent throughout the project, you avoid any major confrontations or unwelcome surprises.

5. Don't point your finger

Avoid finger-pointing at all costs. When anything comes up during construction that wasn't planned, don't look for a culprit or someone to put the blame on. Throwing a sub under the bus or blaming a supplier doesn't do anyone any good. In fact, it could make you look like a project manager who isn't willing to fully take the reins.

Instead, keep thinking "vision forward" — that's one of the themes we live by in our firm — and move into the next action to keep the project moving smoothly.

Gary Dayan is the founder and project manager of Xced Design Build, a Chicago-based creative team of builders and interior designers focused on turning clients' renovation dreams into realities. Dayan spent years successfully managing large teams across Chicagoland in the construction industry on a variety of commercial and residential projects prior to launching Xced in 2002.

The logo for Xced Design Build, featuring the word "Xced" in a large, orange, sans-serif font. The letters are stylized with rounded edges and a consistent weight. The 'X' is formed by two intersecting diagonal lines. The 'c' is a simple circle with a gap at the bottom. The 'e' has a horizontal bar across its middle. The 'd' is a circle with a vertical stem on the right side. The entire logo is set against a light gray background.