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“Preserving the Past while Building the Future.”



Celebrating 131 Years of Service

A note from the Siewers Family...

Happy Summer! We are so happy to see summer arrive! We hope you are able to get some “down time” during the summer season to spend with your family and loved ones.

To kick summer off, we are having a contest here at Siewers Lumber! The contest is called the “Siewers Selfie Contest” and will run through January, 2016. To enter, take a “selfie” or have someone take a picture of you in your Siewers T-Shirt. Post it on the Siewers Facebook page, or you can email your entries to laurenf@siewers.com or bring your photos into the store. Prizes will be given for the ‘Furthest Traveled’ and the ‘Most Creative’ T-Shirt picture. See flyer in this month’s newsletter for more information and get started taking those pictures now!

The newsletter this month is packed full of great articles on ways to improve your business. There are articles on qualities that customer’s value and the importance of the business card! We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter. Thank you for reading it and for your feedback on ways of making it better.

-The Siewers Family

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Contractor News

Four Qualities Your Customers Truly Will Value 'Quality' is a slippery term.

These four words are much easier to appreciate. By Paul Winans

Many contractors use the word “quality” in their advertising, mission statement, or core values. I think what they intend to mean by that word is that the work their company does is done well. From a technical point of view, the work is excellent.

What I think is true more often than not is that most clients don't understand quality as far as the finished product is concerned. Of course, unless something is obviously wrong--such as a door that does not close or paint not covering a surface uniformly--the typical client simply enjoys living in the space.

But that is true only if what clients truly know has been addressed by the contractor before, during, and after the project is done. What are those things? I have four.

Communication

Timely and proactive communication is very important in the eyes of most, if not all, consumers, not just remodeling clients. Think of how you personally feel when you are told by a salesperson or a service provider that something is going to happen at a certain time, it does not happen, and you receive no word from the salesperson or the service provider. You tend to get frustrated and possibly a tad upset.

To make your reputation with clients and in your marketplace stellar, simply set clear expectations, and if something gets in the way of what you said was going to happen, then tell the client as soon as possible. Don't wait until you have a new date/time set; call the client right away and say by when you will be back with solid info.

Cleanliness

When a remodeling company starts working on a house, the company often forgets that the building is the client's home. A home is a safe place, a refuge from the world. When clients see their homes being torn apart, they tend to get a bit scared about their home ever being put back together again.

The successful remodeling company, in the eyes of the clients, is the one that keeps the job site, the house, their home, reasonably clean. Build into your company's proposals the cost to have someone spend up to 30 minutes every day sweeping the site and putting debris in the proper receptacles. Your clients will love it, particularly as they show friends (who could become your company's clients) around the project.

Orderliness

The absolutely cheapest way to dispose of debris is to have one big pile for the length of the project right in front of the house so when it comes time to haul it away the pile is as close as possible to where a truck can be parked.

Imagine your client watching that pile grow. Imagine your client thinking about what his neighbors and friends think about your client as the pile grows and grows. What blight on the neighborhood you have created!

Put debris in a drop box or haul it away weekly, at a minimum. Put the trash pile, if you are going to have one, a bit out of site. By the way: Sort your trash into piles of

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recyclable materials and pure trash (each marked with the appropriate sign). Doing that lets your client and his neighbors know you care about the environment.

On-Time Completion

You probably told your client when the project is going to be done. Do you think that date matters to them? More often than not, YES! Why?

Your client has probably told friends about the done date. As it gets closer and closer, your client will either be happy because the project is being done on time or embarrassed because he/she was stupid enough to hire a contractor who does not know how to schedule properly.

Incorporate into your schedules several slack days every few weeks and give yourself a week or two of grace, depending on the size of the project, at the end of the job. Your clients will focus on the date you tell them. If you beat it, you will be regarded as a hero.

Over time, I came to realize that what remodelers sell is an experience (the service side of the business) that almost incidentally creates a product (the finished remodel). Experiences can be managed so that they create good memories. Good memories make for more referrals.

Give your clients positive experiences while doing good work and watch your business grow!

Speed Up Sales and Set Your Business Apart with These Silver Bullets

By Shawn McCadden

Contractors forever complain about how long the sales process takes these days and how difficult it is to get prospects to make decisions. Recently I found an article in REMODELING by Paul Winans offering an eight-step process to help remodelers speed the sales process and close deals fast. Paul is a smart guy, and his tips could be a big help for remodelers currently seeking a good sales process. However, in my opinion Paul didn't offer anything new for seasoned remodelers looking for the "silver bullets" that could really speed up their process. So, to complement Paul's article, I offer you these two silver bullets guaranteed to either speed up your sales or save you from wasting your valuable time and resources.

1) You have to get or give a fixed budget amount first. 2) Then design to that budget. This consideration is so important. In his article, Paul describes designing and getting the prospects' approval on design before estimating the cost and providing a price for the design. Just think of what your prospect will think of you, and how much longer your sales process will take, if the design and/or your suggested specifications are way over their budget. Using such a process means that if your first attempt is over their budget, you have to repeat those same separated steps (design, then estimate) one or many more times until you finally come back separately with a design, and then a price, they are willing to commit to.

In my opinion, unless working for very affluent clients, most remodelers should not begin design without agreeing on an appropriate and realistic budget first. They should also get a written commitment to work together if their business can design within the prospect's budget. Then, only allow prospects design and specification options within their budget. To do this, you must estimate as you design and must design to the budget. If the

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customer's want more and it will cost more, get them to first sign a change order recognizing the new scope and budget. The change order should confirm, in writing, they will still be going forward with your company for construction.

What would your prospects think of you if you kept showing them designs they cannot afford or don't want to afford; and they have to wait to find out if they can afford? What a letdown that can be for an excited prospect. How long would a realtor or car salesperson last if they didn't confirm and respect their prospects' budgets before showing them homes or cars?

You have to find out how they will make their decision

How many times do remodelers assemble an estimate and proposal only to have their prospects ask them to redo one or both in a different format? For example, you may offer a fixed price for the entire project but then your prospects ask for a breakdown of the work and a room-by-room price so they can decide where they can upgrade things. Or maybe they ask so they can decide which rooms they can afford to do now and which ones they might eliminate or do in Phase II. When this happens, you may say to yourself, or even to your prospect, "Why didn't you tell me that before I did the estimate and proposal?" My question to you is: Why didn't you ask your prospects how they planned to make their decision?

One reality might be that your prospects have no idea how they will make their decision.

If you uncover that reality, you can then help them figure out and commit to a process that works for them. If you have been doing sales for a while, you should have already experienced many of the considerations past prospects have used and or thrown at you last minute. Use those as examples to enlighten your prospect and confirm how they will make their decision.

Doing these two simple things will differentiate you

If you can learn to be successful at both of my suggestions, you will definitely speed up your sales process. You will also become recognized as being very different from most other remodelers and salespeople. Just think of how much time and frustration you will save prospects if the design always moves forward within their budget and you present your information in a way that facilitates their ability to actually make a confident decision.

This process may not work for prospects who don't want to reveal their budget. If that is the case, maybe you should let them know without a budget your process will not work and you will not be able to help them. On the other hand if they like your process and find it valuable, that is likely what they will tell the referrals they send your way. That too will speed up your sales process!

5 Reasons Business Cards Still Matter By Jonathan Long

Everything we do in business today is digital -- sending mail, signing contracts, attending meetings, even networking. The business card is one thing that digital will not fully replace anytime soon.

Here are five reasons why the old school business card is still important -- and why you should have a pocket full of them at all times.

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1. Swapping contact information digitally is impersonal.

Networking is about making genuine connections. Sending contact information via text or email on the spot is convenient but it is also extremely impersonal. Engaging in eye contact and actual conversation is how real relationships begin.

Related: 9 Clever Business Cards You'd Want In Your Wallet

Two individuals with their heads buried in their phones typing away won't create any kind of significant memory of the encounter. You can easily transfer the information from a business card to your mobile device after the conversation.

2. They are the most effective direct marketing tools.

Email marketing, search engine optimization and paid media all do a great job of attracting leads and prospects, but they still aren't as effective as an in-person meeting sealed with a handshake along with a business card exchange.

You can encounter a potential lead or contact at any time -- tradeshow, industry conferences, happy hour, airport lounges -- and arming yourself with business cards at all times will ensure that you never miss an opportunity to make a valuable business connection. Keep some in your pockets, wallet, money clip or laptop bag so the next time you encounter a prospect you are prepared.

3. A business card is the first impression of your brand.

When you meet someone that could potentially be a great prospect or connection, don't you want him or her to walk away with a great first impression? A memorable business card does a lot more than just pass on an email address or phone number.

When I make a connection via my business card, I don't want my brand associated with the word cheap. A retail store trying to make a great first impression wouldn't create a storefront sign with a piece of cardboard and a Sharpie. I have that same mentality when it comes to my business cards.

My goal is to make a memorable first impression -- I use metal business cards from MyMetalBusinessCard.com for extra impact. They make a great first impression and they also act as a great icebreaker. I have never once had a conversation end after handing over my business card. A unique business card will actually fuel the conversation even further.

Related: What to Do When Someone Refuses to Take Your Business Card

Yes, they cost more -- but think of how many unnecessary expenses you can cut to allocate funds for great business cards. Hold off on the ping pong table and espresso machine for the office and get some business cards that will make a great first impression.

4. Creative business cards get shared -- continuing to market for you.

A business card is a physical object that a potential prospect leaves the encounter with. Your brand stays with them.

If you meet a prospect and exchange email addresses and phone numbers, you each walk away with another contact on your mobile phone -- it ends there. If you hand over a creative business card that makes a great impression, that person is likely to show it to other people -- putting you and your brand in front of additional prospects.

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5. Business cards show you are prepared.

Have you ever had someone write his or her contact information on a cocktail napkin and hand it over to you? How about someone that had a mobile phone with a dead battery? It isn't the most professional approach.

If you met two individuals and one was scrambling to find a pen and something to write on and the other person simply pulled out a business card, who would you want to do business with? Showing that you are prepared at all times is a great indicator that you are professional.

When In Doubt, Document By Christopher G. Hill

Discovery is the process of exchanging information that is relevant to a legal dispute. Discovery is everywhere: litigation, arbitration, mediation and even in a spat with a partner. What you have in your records can be the difference between a win or a loss.

Attorneys are lost without a complete file. We are unable to assess risks, properly advise clients and develop strategies. Furthermore, attorneys become expensive when your file isn't in order. Tracking down records, reviewing duplicates and sorting through voluminous files is time intensive.

The process of creating a complete file begins with your documentation policy. There are a bunch of technologically advanced methods for managing your construction documents. If you want high-tech construction document management software, you can go to AccuBuild, Capterra or My Construction Documents. If you're litigation-heavy and constantly concerned about ending up in high-stakes lawsuits, you can turn to Clearwell or CaseCentral.

5 Simple Things You Should Document

1. Document your agreement. Get a written contract and document any and all change orders.
2. Document and save your conversations. You aren't being crafty by confirming your conversation in an email—you're being smart.
3. Keep job records. Every contractor should find a notebook or a time sheet template online, and track all labor. Also, keep a daily notebook of what happened on the job.
4. Keep receipts, invoices, and lading records. Sort them by the contract or change order that they coincide with.
5. Keep copies of insurance, bonds, and taxes on hand. Lawyers like to see insurance policies, guaranty contacts, and bonds right off the bat.

Ways to maintain your documents!

1. Create individual project files. Within that folder, use subfolders to manage different types of documents.
2. Scan all records. Contractors should consider keeping an entirely electronic file. Scan it in each time you receive something new and keep it in your folders.
3. Maintain an electronic file. This goes along with the above. Request electronic copies of documents from your customers and other parties. This ensures that you have the original, untampered files.

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4. Document what you do. Keep a record of what you do on a project and what you do with documents. Consider using a software program like BaseCampHQ or Google Sites.
5. Create a policy and communicate it. Call a meeting, establish a procedure and enforce it.

Quick Contractor Tip

THIS is SAFETY :

Building in general and carpentry in particular, can be dangerous business. Accidents on jobsites and in workshops happen every day, and one mishap can end your livelihood or your life.

In the pages of *THISisCarpentry*, we show methods and practices that we think are safe. But safety is a very personal concept. What may feel safe in one situation might not feel safe in another. And a practice that seems safe for one person, might seem downright dangerous for another.

Please don't try anything you see in *THISisCarpentry*, or anywhere else for that matter, unless you're completely certain that you can do it safely.

TO WORK MORE SAFELY:

- Keep all your tools in tip-top shape.
- Keep your mind in tip-top shape.
- Respect all tools, and fear them a little.
- Never rush your work.
- Always wear protective safety gear.

Enjoy your craft, but always be careful! (www.thisiscarpentry.com)

How would you like to be published in a future issue of Siewers Newsletter?

Be sure it is a quick tip that can help another contractor and one that is simple to understand (“Even I need to understand it!”) It also must be economical to create. Submit your tips to us at laurenf@siewers.com.

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Excerpts from Johnny Siewers II

For the next few months, we will be sharing excerpts from Johnny Siewers II's memories of the old mill on Belvidere. Join us as we travel back in time through thoughts and impressions that a young man had over 60 years ago. I hope you enjoy them as well as we have.

1966: I lived in an apartment at 2203 Stuart Avenue in the Fan District. It was beautiful and included two living rooms with working fire places, two bedrooms, a kitchen, dining area and one bathroom. My rent was \$100 a month.

That winter we had 12 inches of snow on four successive Tuesdays. The temperature never rose above freezing. The snow never melted and was so deep. I began walking to work because I was tired of digging myself a parking space when I arrived at work in the morning and then digging a place out when I came home at night.

Curtis Cain was our fireman, who maintained the steam boiler. He would burn shavings and scrap wood during the day and bank the fire at night with coal, so there would still be a small fire in the boiler when we arrived at 5:00 a.m.

Upon arriving at work one morning, found no fire in the boiler and the pipes frozen. Curtis had fallen asleep the night before and did not come in to fire up the boiler. We had to send everyone home except for a couple of workers who stayed to help me. We used blow torches, working all day, to thaw out the pipes before we could fire up the boiler again. That day remains as one of the coldest and most difficult working days of my life.

The following summer we installed an oil boiler at the cost of \$10,000, a lot of money at that time. This allowed us to operate the oil boiler at night and convert over to the steam boiler during the day when we had someone to feed the fire.

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Growth Seen In Demand For Cabinets, Countertops In April 2015 Kitchen & Bath Design News

The U.S., the world's largest market for cabinets, will see "strong increases" in annual demand through at least 2018, while the continued recovery in residential construction will similarly fuel growth in North American demand for countertops. These are findings from The Freedonia Group, Inc., a Cleveland-based industry market research firm.

Following the collapse in housing construction that began in 2006, demand for both cabinets and countertops declined for several years. However, the current recovery in residential construction is expected to boost U.S. cabinet demand to about \$16 billion in 2018, according to Freedonia. North American countertop demand is projected to grow to an annual market of 80.3 million sq. meters in 2018.

"In addition to stronger construction activity, interest in more expansive kitchen and bathroom designs will boost unit demand for cabinets, while rising interest in premium features and finishes will support value growth," the research firm said.

The growing consumer preference for spacious kitchens and multiple bathrooms require more countertop area. *So come by and see Kellene to help design the cabinet needs for your customer today.*



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"SIEWERS' SHIRT"



SELFIE CONTEST

Take a Photo/Selfie  displaying your "Siewers' Shirt" in a unique or creative setting.

- Share your photo on our Facebook page or email it to laurenf@siewers.com and we will post it for you.
- Pictures will be judged on creativity & how far our shirt has traveled. So don't forget your Siewers' Shirt when traveling.
- View entries on our Facebook page under Photos - Selfie Contest Album at <https://www.facebook.com/SiewersLumberMillwork/timeline> Let the fun begin!!
- Prizes will be awarded in two categories: Most Creative & the Furthest Traveled
 - 2 Grand Prizes of a \$50.00 Siewers' Gift Certificate
 - 2 Runner-up Prizes of a \$25.00 Siewers' Gift Certificate
- Contest ends January 31, 2016 & winners will be announced February 15, 2016.

The adventure starts here....



1901 Ellen Road, RVA



T-Shirt Quilt, submitted by Tim Cockey

....where it ends is up to you!!

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Feel Lucky!

Be sure and bring your business card next time you visit Siewers. Just drop it into the glass fish bowl on the counter to enter a monthly drawing. Good Luck!!!

Congratulations to Cary Grey Quarles our June winner!

June 21st Happy Fathers Day

July 4th Independence Day



Siewers will be closed Friday, July 3rd and reopen at 7:30 am on Monday, July 6th.



Economy Snap Shot.....

	<u>Unemployment Rate – Entire U.S.</u>	<u>Consumer Confidence (Indexed to value of 100 in 1985)</u>	<u>Total Housing Starts/Seasonally Adjusted Annual Rate</u>
May 2015	5.5%	95.4	1,036,000
Prior Month – April 2015	5.4%	94.3	1,165,000
Prior Year – May 2014	6.3%	82.2	986,000

	<u>Gallon (\$) Of Gas</u>	<u>Existing Home Sales</u>	<u>National Avg. Mortgage Rate</u>
May 31, 2015	\$2.74	N/A	3.84
Prior Month – April 2015	\$2.60	5,040,000	3.67
Prior Year – May 2014	\$3.68	4,900,000	4.19

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Market Summary

	<u>June 16, 2015</u>	<u>1/01/15</u>	<u>5/31/14</u>
DOW	17,850	17,823	16,717
NASDAQ	5,035	4,736	4,242
S&P 500	2,083	2,058	1,923

Long & Foster Market Minute / May 2015

New Listings	Current Contracts	Sold Vs. List Price	Months of Supply
2,732	2,066	98.8%	4.7

Median Sales Price	Days on Market
\$220,000	58

Company Mission

To serve the needs of contractors and do-it-yourselfers.



“For those who are willing to make an effort, great miracles and wonderful treasures are in store.” Issac B. Singer

**Siewers Lumber & Millwork
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**Visit our website for product and general information.
www.siewers.com**

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**Hours:
Monday – Friday
7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

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Share with others.

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“Siewers Newsletter”, have them email us at
laurenf@siewers.com and we will add them to our
distribution list.***

....Next issue July 20th