

WC&P Historic Insights

# Tips That Pay Off in Commercial Selling

By Jerome R. Peterson

The fastest-growing area of water conditioning has been in commercial/industrial equipment, where sales over the last five years have doubled annually. While the total dollar volume of such hardware still represents only a fraction of that going into the home, it nonetheless offers exciting potential for every water conditioning dealer.

Applying water treatment equipment to a carwash, motel, hotel, restaurant, laundry, etc. is not as difficult as it might sound. Hundreds of dealers across the country have found this out already. In fact, we have been told by

successful practitioners that the greatest impediment is psychological: Making oneself believe that the commercial water user has, basically, the same problems as the homeowner. And that these problems can be solved in pretty much the same way.



We have always felt that the dealer's best approach to commercial markets has been to create a separate sales department. This, based on the premise

that industrial selling differs from direct consumer contact. In the former, the salesman should have a knowledge of bid procedures and be able to translate water benefits into mostly economic terms. So, if you're talking to a carwash operator (see Feb. 72 editorial), you start with the fact that proper water treatment will save money. For instance, we learned recently of a carwash that installed a water reclamation system. The unit cost approximately \$6,000 and the salesman was able to prove that the owner could pay for the equipment in a single year, through savings in water and sewage tax costs. Also important was the fact that the operator was producing a better product and complying with local pollution laws.

We still believe the best approach is to departmentalize, but we've encountered numerous instances in the past months where dealers are using their regular salesmen to bring in large-ticket business. This is particularly true for market areas with a limited number of commercial prospects. In other words, don't ignore your larger prospects simply because you can't justify a separate, industrially-oriented man.

An article in this issue talks about commercial/industrial sales prospecting. More than anything else, it takes the mystery out of the subject. An alert door-to-door salesman can capture large parts of this business for you if you train him to

recognize how and why water is used in a given commercial establishment.

In this training, it's important to cover several points:

1. There is an optimum water for every manufacturing and/or service procedure. If a business is not using the proper water it is costing him money and his finished product—whether a printed circuit or a hairset—is probably not as good as it can be.

2. Follow conventional sales procedures. Find the need, explain the solution, define the benefits, and close the sale. Too often, the salesman lacks the confidence to close. Selling the businessman and the housewife does not differ when it comes to asking for the order.

3. Call for help if you're in over your head. If the salesman doesn't know what he's talking about, the worst thing he can do is bluff his way to a sale that will cause continued problems. Under-sized equipment or providing soft water instead of demineralized water are two of many ways to ruin a dealer's reputation. The fact is that 90% of the commercial equipment you sell will require no special engineering. Watch out, however, for the other 10%.

4. Emphasize the advantages of your being a local businessman. You have a reputation to protect, you stand behind your products and the service of your equipment is only a phone call away. And sell—don't give away—a service contract that will let the customer reap the benefits of conditioned water without worrying about it.

With a simple shift in emphasis, some basic planning and sales training, you'll find that commercial/industrial sales will help you grow in both sales and profit columns. ♦

*Editor's Note: This editorial piece was first published in March 1972.*