

# New technology vs. the old basics

Technology can boost productivity, but back to basics is better.

BY PHIL SASSO

**Q** What new trends in marketing technology can help me boost my sales?

**A** Technology has become so accessible today that even the most techno-phobic person can put it to use for sales and marketing.

If you aren't a computer person, don't let the word "technology" intimidate you. You sell technology every day. Even the simplest tool you sell is a technology. (Most tools are more advanced than you give them credit for being.)

Also, you don't need to invest in expensive hardware or complicated software to put this technology to work. Everything you need is likely right in your pocket -- and your customer's pocket. It's as close as your cell phone.

For the first time ever, smartphones like Apple's iPhone and Google Android-powered phones are outselling computers. Smartphones put some powerful, easy-to-use tech-

been using text messaging more frequently. It's a technology available on most of even the oldest phones out there. It can help you with sales, promotions and even collections.

## Get orders by text

One dealer I've talked to encourages his customers to text him right from their bay the minute they think of a tool they want. This way the customer never forgets to ask for a tool, and the dealer has time to order anything not in inventory. Texting is second nature for younger techs and helps the dealer stay stocked with the right tools.

## Push promotions by text

If you're a little more tech-savvy, you can use an online service like dialmycalls.com to broadcast brief promotional text messages to all your customers at one time. A tech may not check his email every day, but he likely has his phone in the bay with him all day long. Something simple like "8-Piece 3/8-inch Drive Metric Crow's Foot Wrench Set - SALE \$39.99. Text or call to reserve yours," can help you announce a promotion before you ever walk in the door. But be sure you get your customer's permission to text him, keep it brief and keep it to about once a week or less. (Text messaging costs extra on some plans, and the last thing you want is to tick off your customer.)

## Collections by text

You might consider using text messaging as a collection tool, too.

Cornwell dealer Damien DaCosta of Murfreesburo, Tenn. often sends individual text messages to a customer asking for an OK to run the credit card number he has on file for that week's payment. It's not for every week or every customer, but it can save both you and the tech time and keeps the cash flowing.

All these are interesting ideas that can bump up sales and cashflow. But text messaging is not likely to double your sales or rock your bottom line. Looking for a more substantial sales boost? Read on...

**Q** I used to blame my sluggish sales on the economy. Now all the other dealers I know are starting to do a little better and my business is still flat. What am I doing wrong?

**A** I wish I knew you well enough to tell you what you're doing wrong. But my guess is as sales slacked off during the peak of the Great Recession that you started to slack off, too. You stopped pushing yourself, just picked low hanging



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nology right in your hands. Smart dealers will be using this simple technology more and more to keep connected with customers in new and innovative ways -- well beyond simple phone calls.

A few dealers I've talked to have

fruit, and forgot the importance of the basics.

Getting the basics right is difficult. It's tedious. It's time-consuming. It's hard work. But it's the cornerstone of success in any business. Being disciplined is what sets the top sellers apart from the second tier.

Let's look at one of the simplest and yet most effective things you can do: Stay on schedule. It sounds silly, but if you're not on time, you're wasting your time. Being on schedule best serves you, your customers and the shop owner.

### Why you want to be on schedule

For you, being on time means you're being efficient. Being a good time manager in this business is key. In fact, in any industry, the best salespeople tend to be the ones that make the best use of every minute in their workday. Being productive means keeping a tight schedule.

Remember, "Dealer Math" goes something like this: A few more stops each day multiplied by a few more techs at each stop equals a whole lot more money in your pocket.

To squeeze all the stops you can in a day, you need to run your route like clockwork. Get in, get out, get on

your schedule out the window?

Obviously, if it's a sure sale, you need to close the sale. So do you end up missing some stops?

"There are ways to make up time," says 22-year Mac Tools veteran Tom Neamon. "I usually take a

45-minute lunch. Some days, that's only 15 minutes." He usually spends about five minutes with each customer, but he says when customers are out sick or in training he can buy back some time. *(Continued page 20)*

## If you're not on time, you're wasting your time.

your way. Keeping to a daily routine is actually a lot less stressful than playing catch-up all the time.

But sometimes staying on schedule is easier said than done. What can you do when you're negotiating a big ticket sale, like a toolbox, and you know it's going to push your schedule back? Do you walk away? Or throw

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## SALES Q & A

### Your customers want you on schedule

When you're on schedule it also shows your customer that you respect them and their time. Showing respect like that can earn you their loyalty. They don't want to waste time looking at their watch and waiting. They're counting on you. No tech wants to be left wondering when and if their tool guy will show up.

"If I'm going to have to skip a shop I always call and let the guys know," Neamon says. "They really appreciate that. Sometimes I'll offer to doubleback the next day to see them, but most of them tell me 'Don't worry about it,' they'll see me next week ... A lot of them are looking forward to my visit. I don't want to let them down."

### The shop owner wants you on schedule

Being on-schedule can help your relationship with the shop owner or manager, too. It helps keep their techs productive and not hanging out waiting for you, or wasting time shooting the bull on your truck. By earning their respect you might also earn that owner's business for on-going consumable orders or big ticket equipment purchases.

### R-E-S-P-E-C-T

What do you do about time-wasters? You know, that guy or group that is just shooting the bull and won't get off your truck?

If you show respect for their time by being on schedule, they should respect your time too. Remember, those techs dawdling on your truck

aren't likely your best customers anyway. Your best customers are usually the ones in a hurry to get back to work to make more money to buy more tools. So, although it may seem awkward the first few times, just ask them to leave. Tell them the guys at your next stop are expecting you.

Or you could do what Cornwell's DeCosta does and simply say "Hey, get the @#! off my truck."

Harsh? Yes. Effective? You bet. Offensive? It depends on your personality and your relationship with your customers. Obviously, I don't suggest this tactic for most dealers. You could lose a lot more customers than you gain back in time. (However, fewer customers could make it easier to keep on schedule. Not profitable, but on-schedule.) ■

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