

Landscape Design/Build

Smart Marketing: Prove you're better

Learn about a new sales tool: evidence management

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If you think you have a better company than your competitors and you are frustrated each time you lose a job to them, read on. Let's assume you are the better company, and let's also assume you're fairly priced. You may not be getting the job because you haven't effectively proven to the customer that you are the better company.

Fear not. Enter evidence management, a sales tool that allows you to tell your value story and show customers the evidence of that story. I often find in consulting with landscape contractors that their company value is one of the best-kept secrets from prospective as well as existing customers. Most landscape contractors are not comfortable with the sales process and assume the prospective customer knows their value.

Know and tell

Here's what you need to "know and tell." First, who are you as a company? What is your story? What are your strengths and weaknesses? What is your unique value proposition (UVP)? What makes you more valuable than your competitors?

Let's shift gears over to the competition. Who are your competitors? What are their strengths and weaknesses? What is their UVP? Now that you have that data, you can create your evidence management program.

Here's how to prepare a value story for your company. Wear your consumer hat for a moment. When you are being sold and you hear words like "best customer service" and "quality," don't you want someone to prove to you what that means? If you say you are the customer-centric landscape design/build company, prove it. You are customer-centric because you provide services like:

- 24-hour account updates via a password-protected online account
- Designated account managers who are equipped with a pager and cell phone for 24-hour access if necessary
- A customized proposal with detailed cost savings, asset enhancement programs and return on investment clearly documented

Now you're beginning to look different from the competition. You say that your staff is highly skilled and trained. Show them evidence of it:

- Your account managers hold an ALCA certified landscape professional (CLP) designation
- Your foremen are ALCA certified landscape technicians (CLTs)
- Your designers have four-year degrees from top horticultural universities and are licensed landscape architects

Provide them with further evidence of what it took to get those designations and the experience that proves their value.

Now you can ask the customer if the competition is equally qualified. Remember to ask the customer what their decision drivers are, and ask them to prioritize them for you. Then come fully prepared with proof of your value.

The way that your company manages evidence to communicate your company story can be the difference between success and failure. I can guarantee that this will increase your sales closing ratio and differentiate your company from the competition. My proof and evidence: It's been working successfully for my clients for more than 15 years!