

Signature Press



MINING FOR NEW BUSINESS

By **Barry Himmel**
Rental Management

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A fairly common symptom of today's economy is that the phone is not ringing as often and fewer customers and prospects are visiting your location.

As you try to maintain and build your company's revenue, a great source for new business is your current customer base. Teach your sales team to be more proactive by encouraging them to ask some simple questions that will not only provide more leads, but additional information on the customer.

1. Ask where and when the customer's next job is. When someone is returning a piece of equipment, it is very easy to ask them about their next job and anticipated equipment needs. If the customer is not sure of the specifics, make a note to call them as the next job approaches. They will appreciate and remember the call.

2. Ask if there is anyone else in their company with rental needs. If the company is large and has other divisions, ask for a referral. When the customer has a good experience with your company, they are almost always happy to provide a referral. It is the easiest way to grow your contact list and business.

3. Don't forget to upsell. This should be obvious, but it is rarely done. For example, Signature conducts hundreds of mystery shop calls every month, and we notice that upselling is only part of the equation about 35 percent of the time. Customers always have other needs and this should be a routine part of your selling strategy.

4. Remember to cross-sell. What is the difference between cross-selling and upselling? Cross-selling is when you are promoting other areas of your business. For example, if the customer is renting because their equipment is out of service, offer your service or parts department. They will appreciate working with a full-service dealer who can offer one-stop shopping. Signature's mystery shopping results show that cross-selling is done less than 15 percent of the time.

5. Promote specials. Many companies have seasonal promotional items that are of great value to your customers. Don't keep them a secret! Let customers know firsthand what you are offering, instead of just putting them on a mailing list. The more communication with the customer, the better.

It is a challenge to attract new customers, especially in today's economy. Make certain you are getting the most from your existing customers. Work hard to strengthen those relationships. They are your primary source of revenue and referrals. You may find that you don't have to look much further than your current customers to build your bottom line.