

Sell Against Your Competition Without Negativity.

Competitive landmines come in many forms. Here's how to plant one that's effective.

SMART STRATEGIES IN REMODELING & RENOVATION SALES

Aug/Sept 2021

I recently built a training program that takes a deep dive look at a few competitors. During many hours of research, I came across multiple references to some of these companies using disparaging remarks when comparing themselves to the local competition. There were many comments from homeowners unappreciative of this approach. I'm not a believer of using negative sales tactics when dealing with the competition in front of the customer. A piece of advice my Dad often gave to me when I was younger still resonates with me today and that advice is "Don't try to make yourself look better by making somebody else look bad." Which leads me to the question, how do you sell yourself against your competition and not come across as negative?

This led to more research and discovery of a concept that I'd never heard of before, but it must be quite popular since there are multiple references to it when performing a Google search. The concept is "Competitor Landmines". Try it, Google "Competitor Landmines" and watch as multiple articles and blog posts come up. A landmine is a military weapon designed to be hidden and detonated to exact damage on the enemy. A competitor landmine is a thought, question or idea planted with the homeowner designed to appear and exact damage during a competitor's sales presentation.

The use of a Competitor Landmine could be particularly useful in those situations when a homeowner does not buy from you immediately. When you leave a potential customer's home when getting a response of "We need to think it over" or "We are getting more quotes." The homeowners will be making a very large and important purchasing decision with only two pieces of information available to them. Whatever you leave behind in terms of a leave behind packet and their memory, and that's it. In this type of situation, you, and your offering will be compared to companies who were in the home before you and after you.

If you read up on this subject, you'll uncover many examples of how a Competitor Landmine might work, but many of them, to me, seem manipulative. However, after some consideration, I believe the following approach could be very helpful to you in the home.

First you must know your unique, competitive advantages in the marketplace. What strengths you have over your main competitors and what needs, or problems of a homeowner are solved by the uniqueness of your product or service. It could be product warranty, some element of your service, installation technique, energy efficiency, lead time etc. Then position your unique competitive advantages as things that most good companies do. The competitor must then defend themselves to homeowners when the landmine comes up during their sales presentation. Click – Boom. Here's an example of how this would look in real life. Let's say you have a window product that has a higher design pressure rating than any of your local competitors, and a homeowner who is looking for a strong, durable window. You tell the homeowner "most good companies will know the design pressure rating of their window and will be able to tell you the features of the window that allow it to get that rating." Click – Boom!! It's worth noting that you must be sure of your competitive advantages to use a Competitive Landmine. Otherwise, you are giving further legitimacy to your competition. If you represent a competitive advantage as something most good companies do, and the homeowner finds that 2-3 of the home-improvement companies they have spoken to do it, that may put some further price pressure on your offering.

Give it a try and see what happens. In addition to a leave behind packet, plant a Competitor Landmine and see if it helps differentiate you from the competition when they walk onto the battlefield, or in this case, the homeowner's living room.



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Be the best you, even during a virtual presentation.

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March/April 2021

Last month's column discussed the unintended messages that may be delivered to your customers by the appearance of your sale tools, vehicles, and your personal appearance. Covid-19 has changed the way you interact with homeowners, at least some of the time, moving many meetings to a virtual environment. This month's column will focus on the unintended messages sent when you are not cognizant of appearance in a virtual setting.

First Question Still the Same.

Just like with face to face sales calls, I believe that when you arrive for a virtual sales call the first decision that a homeowner will make is "Do I buy this salesperson?" They make decisions on your honesty, trustworthiness, knowledge, competence, and if they don't "buy" you, then selling your company, product and price becomes more difficult. Some of these decisions take time to work through, while others are pretty much instantaneous. Let's look at body language, dress, and physicality of space to help ensure the messages you're delivering virtually are ones you want to deliver.

Muted Messages.

An important part of any sales interaction, body language messages, are easier to deliver face to face than in a virtual setting where they are more muted. During a virtual presentation, your only visible from the chest up, and you should focus on exaggerating body language triggers like smiling, eye contact and nodding of your head. Smile big... and smile often to communicate that you are likeable, engaged, open and confident.

The tendency during virtual meetings is to look at the other person on the screen, but what they see is you looking down, or to the side depending on what type of device is being used. Focus on making eye contact with your camera, so it appears you are making eye contact with your customer during a presentation. This is a balancing act for sure, you need to make eye contact with the homeowner, but also need to read their face as well for clues on their understanding of your message. For that reason, you will want to alternate where you focus, but make sure

to make eye contact with your camera during important moments, especially when asking a question, or asking for the sale. Nod your head often when the homeowner is speaking so they get the message that your listening intently and receiving their message.

Virtual Dress Code.

Be mindful of what your wearing when presenting virtually. Avoid black or white shirts if presenting on a laptop or computer. Those cameras can have some auto adjust issues with those colors which will make you appear fuzzy as you move during the presentation. I personally have not noticed that issue when using an iPad or iPhone. Also avoid bold color prints or patterns as they can be distracting. The dress code for a virtual presentation should be the same as a face to face sales presentation. If you want to be perceived as a sales professional, you should look like a sales professional. That means business casual, from the shirt, or blouse to the dress slacks or skirt, all the way down to the shoes. Scratch that last part – let's be realistic, you can get away with going barefoot, or wearing fuzzy slippers for a virtual sales call. After all I don't want to be a "Dress Dictator"!!

Lights, Camera, Background.

Where you place the camera, the lighting, and what's in the background should be planned out as well. Bring your camera as close to eye level as you can get it to keep your audience from having a clear view up your nostrils. Avoid lighting that is directly behind or above you, especially if it's a harsh light. This will make you appear dark and not easy to make out. For best results, lighting should be behind the camera or at a 45-degree angle to you. There are many relatively inexpensive lighting options available that can help and a small investment can go a long way. Keep the area behind you clean and free of clutter to cut on distractions. A sign, or screen with your logo may be a good choice.

There you have it – with a little forethought and planning, you can make the virtual you, look as good as the real you... or in my case... better.



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