



No More Zeros!

How much does it cost you to generate a service call? If you took the cost of your advertising and divided it by the number of new customers you acquire in a year, you might find it costs you \$200 or more. Then there are all your other costs of running calls that need to somehow be figured into the equation.

How much does it cost you when a tech runs a service agreement tune-up or inspection and turns in a "zero" service invoice, or runs a billable call and comes back with a "minimum charge only" ticket?

Have you ever thought what it costs you to go out to someone's home or place of business, quote them on something, then be turned away because your price is too high?

I can see someone asking their co-workers who they should call for service and someone saying, "I forget who we use, but don't call (your company). I had them out and they're too high!"

Every time you run a call and get a turn-down, especially due to price, you've just spent time and money to generate bad publicity for yourself!

"Moneyball":

The movie "Moneyball" was about baseball recruiting. In a nutshell, the scouts for the poorest team in MLB were always on the lookout for the next great, undiscovered superstar talent. A big point in the movie was that it's almost impossible to predict how well someone is going to do until they step up to the plate in the Major Leagues. Some prospects that entered the league as sure-fire winners couldn't get a hit.

A new guy comes along with a theory: **You don't need superstars and home-run hitters.** What you really need is for everyone who steps up to the plate to just get on base. That was his whole thing: Just get on base! He had a list of the players in the league who statistically had the highest probability of getting on base. As it works out, they were also the cheapest to recruit. They recruited them and it worked!

I was deeply moved by the movie.

Here's the thing, a long time ago and in a galaxy far away, I was an athlete. I fought in the ring for money. After that I went into competitive running. As I look back on my past I can't escape the fact that I know I could have fought harder and won more fights than I did, and I could have ran faster and won more races ... *and I hate to lose!* It's hard to think about, but I let myself get beaten.

When you watch "The Ultimate Fighter," you're always watching two guys you've never seen before go at it. All you know about them are their stats. I always try to guess who's going to win. Regardless of height, reach, or any statistical advantage one fighter may have over another, I'll always pit the undefeated fighter against the fighter with losses on his record. I like guys who refuse to go down, and when they do, come back swinging.

Most people, in sales situations and otherwise, give up too soon, and *allow* themselves to be beaten.

As a contractor, you need techs with hard heads and strong bones who are unwilling to submit ... who are unwilling to be defeated. Techs who, when they get knocked down, get up and get back into the fight.

Commitment:

About a year ago, the loyal, dedicated, hard-working, sincere, and well-trained service technicians in my family's company accidentally fell into a bit of a rut. They were only selling something on about half of their calls, which was very unusual. I was called in to provide additional sales training.

I told them that they didn't need any more sales training - that they were already better salesmen than any of the techs in any of our competitors' companies, and I meant it when I said it.

I talked to the guys about "Moneyball," and how, for that day and that day only, I didn't care what they sold, even if it was only \$80, but to sell something ... anything ... on every call - *to just get on base!*

They weren't lacking in sales technique or sincerity, what they lacked was commitment. A commitment to "**NO ZERO TICKETS!**"

Historically speaking:

I'd already been through this a few year's prior with their company's owner and father to my godchildren, the greatest graduate of my training of all time, Gene Slade, Jr.

Gene was having trouble closing. I told him the problem was giving up too soon. I told him he was letting it happen.

He committed to going an entire day with no zeros. He made it. So he went for another ... and then another ... and another. We quit counting how many calls he ran without getting a zero after

60. If he and I hadn't had our little talk, which again consisted of nothing more than getting a commitment out of him to not accepting a zero, he would have blanked on 30 of those calls.

So, are we talking high pressure?

NO!

But you better make sure your customers know you're sincere.

Every day technicians draw up a list of perfectly legitimate recommendations, and when customers give them the slightest hint of resistance, they tuck their tail between their legs, let it go, and never bring it up again, because they're so concerned about being seen as high-pressure.

You bring things up one time, get a no, and say nothing to make sure they know you're serious, and that you're not just bringing it up to sell somebody something, that's exactly what they're going to think you were doing.

After you're gone, they're going to say to each other, "Did you see that? He said we really needed about \$2,000 worth of work, and when we gave him the slightest resistance, he just walked away! You know what I think? I don't think we needed it at all! I think he was just trying to rip us off! And he seemed like such a nice guy. I'll bet he was just a wolf in sheep's clothing! I'm never calling that company back!"

The fine art of "The Nibble":

Gene Slade, Jr. is used to showing people a list of recommendations with a bottom-line dollar amount in the thousands, and getting an instant turn-down. He'll usually point to the first couple of things on the list and say, "This has to be done." Maybe about half the time that's all it takes to get a small sale right there, but the other half it looks like he's going to get a zero or minimum charge only ticket.

When it's a turn-down, Gene says, "Okay. And I'll need to put your equipment back together."

Always do a little dis-assembly of some sort prior to quoting prices. Frequently, all your customers need is ten minutes or so without you around to digest everything that's been said and face the reality of their situation; to realize that at least part of what you're recommending really ought to be done, and to figure out where they're going to get the money.

By then Gene comes back and does what he calls "nibbling."

He'll say, "Hey man, I really couldn't put this back together without giving you a chance to at least do (something fairly inexpensive). It's so much less than what he'd originally quoted, that he rarely gets a turn-down.

Now it's time for a "fast nibble." They're both looking at the list together, and when the customer says, "Okay, I'll take that item there," Gene points to another item and says, "And you should get one of these, too."

We determined in our company that "fast nibbles" alone resulted in an average up-sell of \$111 per call. Multiply that times 1,000 calls and it's more than \$100,000 in additional sales per year, for doing next to nothing!

The results:

As a result of our little talk, the techs commitment to "no zeros" and our next month was the biggest month in the company's history.

All it took was commitment.

Just for today, commit to selling at least one thing, anything, on every call.

Steps to a higher service invoice:

1. When setting the service appointment, the call-taker should tell the customer to expect the technician to perform a complete inspection
2. When performing your diagnostic, say as little as possible and look absolutely everything over prior to offering any opinions, recommendations, or prices
3. Find a quiet space, such as your service vehicle, and write up a list of every single deficiency your company has the ability to resolve, in order of priority. Strike a subtotal under the list of things that are mandatory and must be done today, another subtotal under things that can be put off but will need to be done sooner or later, and a final total under the things that are purely optional
4. Go over the list with the customer. Always talk about the problem in front of the problem. Don't talk to them about their bathroom, their furnace, or their electrical panel (switchboard) standing at the kitchen counter
5. Whether they buy anything or not, always go back for a "nibble."

Also:

- Be sincere
- Be honest
- Project confidence
- Project authority
- Make excellent eye contact.

WHO ANSWERS THE PHONE?

The person who responds to telephone inquiries for service and free estimates has one of the most important positions in a service company.

This person is the front-line representative of your company.

This is also the person who helps you make the most of your advertising dollars.

Answering a service contractor's telephone is a sales position that requires as much sales skill as any other position in the company.

This series will teach your existing staff how to book more service calls that are of a higher quality.

If you've got the wrong person in that position, this series will teach you how to find and train the right person.

I just began recording my appointment sellers on all marketing lines for incoming leads! I get a report every morning on my iPhone that allows me to listen to the recordings from the previous day. After a good cry, I decided as a sales trainer myself, I would have to write scripts for my "Appointment Sellers" as you call them. Then it dawned on me! I listened to your latest release, "Who Answers The Phone?" Wow! You just saved me 6 months to a year, and you've done it better than I could have. I hope that contractors (outside of my area) get ahold of this training. It's worth it's weight in diamonds! -G.S.

[Click here for more info on Who Answers the Phone?](#)

Other Charlie Greer Audio/Visual Service Sales Training:

- [Tec Daddy's Service Technician Survival School on DVD](#)
- [Plumbing Service Agreements Made Simple](#)
- [Quantifying Quality: How to BEAT LOW-BIDDERS](#)
- [Over The Top HVAC Sales](#)
- [Slacker's Guide to HVAC Sales.](#)

Everyone who buys something from my website this week will receive a 10% discount. Just enter the coupon code "EMAIL" when you check out.

About Charlie Greer:

I'm the service technician who helps **ELECTRICAL, PLUMBING,** and **HVAC** service contractors become **MILLIONAIRES** by teaching their techs, their salespeople, and their CSRs how to sell more at higher prices. I've done it for plenty of other contractors, so there's no reason why I can't do it for you. I'm doing it for others while you're reading this.

I started plumbing in 1975 in Cleveland, as a pipe-fitter, doing things the old-fashioned way - threading black pipe by hand, etc.

I got into HVAC in 1985 by answering a classified ad for a sales trainee at Ron



Smith's old company, Modern Air, in Fort Myers, Florida. After a couple of years I received national recognition for my high closing ratio and high average sale. By 1988 I quit taking leads and did nearly 100% self-generated HVAC sales.

While at Modern, I started running service calls with the technicians to learn more about the industry and the equipment, and to bond with my co-workers. While working with them, I couldn't help but observe that they were stepping over and around replacement opportunities galore because they weren't interested in sales. Starting around 1989, I stopped running sales calls and began working out of a service truck.

In 1990 I began my consulting practice, specializing in sales training for the contractors, service technicians, salespeople, and CSRs of **PLUMBING, ELECTRICAL, and HVAC** service companies.

For 15 years I traveled throughout North America, running sales and service calls with HVAC contractors, their salespeople, and their service technicians. I've worked in every kind of company, from large to small, in big cities and out in the country.

[Click here for my complete bio.](#)

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When your employees sell more at higher prices, you make the best kind of money, which is money that goes into your bank account as a result of the actions of others. So unless you can think of a better way to increase your personal income right now, **go get permission and your credit card from your wife**, buy something, play it for your employees, and start setting your financial goals higher.

Yours for increased success,
Charlie "Tec Daddy" Greer

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