



Winning the Job – Quoting Tips

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No matter what your role in the flooring industry, you are influenced by the outcome of the QUOTATION process. The client's response to the offer has either a good or bad effect on everyone in the business – from sales to marketing, warehouse and contractors, admin and reception and management. Of course, the desired result is acceptance – meaning sales of product and/or services – which then generates a profit for the business.

Simple, right? If only... So let's look at a few ways we could improve the likelihood of a positive quoting experience.

1. The Phone Inquiry

No matter what your role is in the business, when you answer the phone and it's a new customer enquiry, the first impression (and lasting memory) that the client gets is YOU and your reaction to their call! So be nice, polite, react in a way that you would like to be treated. Answer the query if you can; if not, find someone who can, or take the details of the caller and make SURE that you do get an answer for them! I am sure that you all have had to deal with call centres before, some do it better than others, right? Well now it is up to you!

2. The Shop Visit

From the moment I walk into a store, I expect to be wowed. I want to see things I didn't even come in to buy, and probably will buy now (great display work, Major Hardware Chain starting with 'B'!) Then I would love to be asked if I needed any help with my decisions – which I can always refuse, but usually I will have questions. Be polite (of course). Ask questions of the client, qualify what they really want (need) and what their current floor/home flooring system is (subfloor, location, etc.) This shows a genuine interest in their needs. Be honest with what can be supplied/achieved with their home, don't make promises you know cannot be fulfilled.

3. The Site Visit/Measure

Okay, here's where I was going to start, but the previous two steps are also very important. If you own/manage your business as a sole trader, chances are it is you who is doing the site quotes. Probably you have been doing this for years and have a standard formula that works for you – well done! But maybe it can be improved a little? Think about how you approach the client from *their viewpoint* – what would you expect?

Have you just finished work for the day, are you dusty, dirty, smelly? Should you have a spare shirt in the van, a can of deodorant maybe? What did you have for lunch, was it a Friday beers lunch with garlic bread? How's your breath? If you have just coated using a solvent based coating, you will smell bad! Consider chewing some gum, perhaps even a toothbrush? Okay, I know it's not a date, but first impressions matter.

If you *look good*, you will present a professional image of your business. I make a habit of removing my shoes at the front door (except if it's a construction site!) Just a sign of respect for their home. Remember, you are a guest. Smile – simple, yes, but look like you're happy to be there! If you are offered a coffee or tea, it is better to accept and not drink it all than refuse hospitality. Start the conversation with some positive comments about the home, however small. "I love the colour of your tiles", "Have you recently renovated the kitchen?" "The air conditioning works really well, it's very comfortable in here" ... You get the idea.

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Usually, it is better to qualify what areas are being quoted on up front, then do a measure up and record the results. Come back to the table. If you feel confident calculating the costs, do so then, as it is harder for the client to say NO in front of you than by return email or phone call. Show some pictures of your best work NOW – it’s your time to shine, baby! Wow them, get them on board, tell them how you perform your work tasks, what steps you take to minimise dust, how your coatings are the best available, why they should choose your business as their contractor. It is much easier to impress now you’re face to face.

Talk about your staff qualifications, industry training and awards, ATFA membership and level – it could put you ahead of your competitor. Heck, I have even talked about how I sand the corners with a triangular sander after scraping – that has helped me win a quote before! Small differences, clients like to know what you are doing and why it is better for them.

Lastly, ask them if they have any more questions – if not, would they be willing to accept your quotation now? Harder to say NO when looking at your sad puppy eyes, remember? Discuss your availability, when it suits them, then lock it in!

4. The Follow-Up

Depending on the result of the site visit, this could be your second chance at winning the job. So, whether by phone or in person, smile – yes people can tell if you aren’t happy in a phone call – and impress with your voice! Ask how the renovations are going (if they are...), whether the kitchen is installed yet, anything relevant to the previous discussion you had with them. Then ask the question, “Have you decided to accept our quotation?” If not, then *why* not? Was there a cheaper quote? How did it compare, were all things equal? *Really?*

It can get tough here, we’re relying on the honesty of the client. If there is a cheaper quote, ask to see it. They could be just calling your bluff. Or it could give you the chance to compare what is offered, perhaps

not the same service? This is entirely the decision of your business and how they deal with this scenario, but my advice is to hold your ground, explain why your business is a little dearer, how your business provides a better, cleaner, more modern approach to the service, reliable qualified tradespeople and modern equipment, guaranteed results, satisfied client reviews, etc. Purely matching price is the easy option, but we all know that rising costs of doing business don’t make this path sustainable.

5. The Day of Installation (okay, technically post-quote, but still important!)

This should be easy, right? All we must do is complete the job but hang on the client is here to supervise... darn! How do we deal with this? Give them a task, something they can feel satisfied with but doesn’t interfere with your process – like making sure the pets and children don’t get into the work areas, or looking after power cords and connections – you’ll think of something! The client is just interested in the work, they’re not really studying you or your methods, just the results. And you are good at what you do, so shine! It will get too noisy eventually and they will probably leave.

6. The “How Did We Go?” Phone Call

Following up on a successful installation is the icing on the cake or should be. Provided all has gone well beforehand, this should be a pleasant experience, just ensuring that the customer has no concerns or final requests. It could turn into a sales opportunity for cleaning or maintenance supplies, or even further work!

In conclusion, don’t sell yourself short when dealing with clients on a quote. Be positive and happy to be there, it is an opportunity for new business and who doesn’t want that? Explain how you do things, what makes your business better than your competitors, while not putting them down, and finally don’t be afraid to ask for the job!

Good luck and go get ‘em, tigers! 🐯

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