

Like a Boss: Making Customer Communication Count



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Les Cline, owner of [Teacher's Landscaping and Irrigation, LLC](#) in Olathe, Kansas, calls communication skills the “most important tool you own” but says that it’s something landscape business owners don’t always fully use. He says that too often that tool is left on a dusty shelf, failing to be utilized. But over the years Cline says he has learned to stop thinking of communication as an annoyance and start thinking of it as a business accelerator and key to achieving goals. It has improved business and Cline says it could for other landscape business professionals, too.

“Use your mouth and your ears as much as you use your mower and your trimmer,” Cline says. “All day, every day.”

Cline says that good communication can save you time. For example, by making a quick call the day before an appointment to confirm it, you don’t waste time by driving there when the customer needs to cancel. On the flip side, Cline says you should always inform your customer of any delays on your end, as soon as you can.

“Respect your customer’s time as much as your own,” he says. “You can also reduce call backs and extra time re-working an estimate by reading back to your clients their wants or needs list. I call this the ‘Echo Effect.’ This practice helps define your scope of work and gives your clients a chance to remember that ‘other thing’ they forgot to tell you.”

Good communication can also increase your sales, Cline says. Handling customer interaction face-to-face is the most effective way to win work, Cline says. Customers appreciate getting that face time. It also poses a natural opportunity to suggest other work the customer may need.

Cline also advises not to “send it and forget it.” You should always follow up your estimate or bid with a friendly call a day or two later.

“Protect your investment of time to give your bid the best chance of being accepted,” Cline says. “Personal and timely interaction will generate referrals and repeat business – bank on it.”

Finally, good communication will also help polish your professionalism. Cline says one of the top complaints he has heard are about contractors who do not call back or don’t show up when they say they will.

“Your first impression is not your best one – it is your only one,” he adds. “Remember that clear and timely communication builds trust in you and your work. Trust is powerful – even more powerful than the price. And at the end of the day, you are really selling trust, not a product or a service.”

Our [Like a Boss](#) series highlights some common business challenges landscape professionals face and how they conquer them.