

# The Irrigation Remote



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Should it be standard equipment?



The Rain Master Promax irrigation remote.  
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The answer is adamantly “yes.” Many service technicians, however, don’t use irrigation remotes. They think a remote would be a nice tool, but for various reasons just don’t use one, and make up excuses like, “I need to keep all my guys busy,” “It won’t save that much time” or “They cost too much.” In some cases, it’s the fear of spending money on tools that service staff will tear up or lose. Sometimes it’s the task of having to hook up a pigtail to plug into the remote receiver. For some companies, the remote is just too efficient; it reduces their potential billing hours. For others, it’s the fear of the remote showing flaws they don’t want to know about. They just want to do what the customer called about and get out of there.

During 27 years of owning an irrigation company, the remote was an integral part of my “customer for life” approach. It was a standard part of any service call to begin by setting up the remote. We also went a step further and hooked up a permanent pigtail for the remote receiver to use on future service calls. I’ve never thought it was necessary to get the customer’s permission to be a more efficient irrigator. We weren’t just interested in fixing the initial reason for the service call. Our goal was to make the system better than the day it was installed.

After fixing and explaining the initial problem, we always walked the customer through the system using the remote. We also took this time to point out various other problems or flaws in the system. Rarely does an irrigation system have no room for improvement. Selling additional work is much easier when you’re not running back and forth between the controller and the customer. The remote allowed us to run multiple zones at the same time, so explaining coverage issues was much easier. Sometimes we got permission to

fix the issue immediately, so a small one-hour-billing job became a five-hour-billing job. Other times, we got the customer back on the calendar immediately for a future service call. Customers recognized they were getting value because they were dealing with a company that optimized efficiency to minimize labor costs.

The remote's added sales opportunities aren't its only advantage. Benefits also include:

- Eliminates the need for two-person crews.
- Makes it easier to train new technicians.
- Speeds up wire troubleshooting issues.
- Allows rear entry garages to remain locked, eliminating theft problems.
- Speeds up winter blowouts and spring turn-ons.
- Lowers landscape maintenance companies' cost to fulfill the irrigation checkout portion of their contract.
- Makes systems with hard-to-reach controllers easier to service
- Speeds up flushing to install nozzles and make final adjustments on new systems.
- Speeds up final walk-throughs.

This list doesn't include the many minor repairs that often get overlooked or pushed aside because they're too much trouble to fix, but often contribute to customer dissatisfaction. Once the endless trips back and forth to the controller have been eliminated, fixing these becomes a no-brainer.

Now that you're convinced that remotes are the way to go, which one should you choose? If your company only deals with one manufacturer's controller, then it's most cost-efficient to use a manufacturer-specific remote. In most cases, however, service technicians are dealing with multiple brands of controllers, so a universal remote would be a much better purchase. Two products to consider are the Rain Master Promax UA and the TRC Commander and Sidekick. Each has its particular advantages, so explore the features of each thoroughly to find the one that best fits your needs and budget.

It takes a leap of faith to believe that by becoming a more efficient irrigator, one who goes the extra mile on quality, it will lead to more customers. Not all customers will appreciate the results of your investment in an irrigation remote, but those who do are the type of customers you want. They will also become your best word-of-mouth for new customers.

The author is an irrigation remote connector wholesaler, and recently owned an irrigation company for almost 30 years.