

## **Green Selling Tip – Selling in an Uncertain Economy**

Uncertainty in the economy has put the breaks on customer buying. Even “manufacturing machines” such as Toyota have seen sales drop by more than 30 percent, causing the company to close factories for the first time in more than 50 years.

In an economic slowdown, consumers feel a reluctance to buy anything unless it is absolutely necessary. Along with this, they have a tendency to delay making changes—even when it comes to changing from conventional to Green cleaning systems. The reason behind this: fear and uncertainty as to how things will unfold in the future.

However, as janitorial distributors marketing Green cleaning products know, when the going gets tough, the tough come up with new ideas and selling techniques to keep sales growing. Here are some tips that can help:

- Point out added value. End customers need to know that if they transfer to environmentally preferable cleaning products, they will get more “bang for the buck.” Many Green cleaning chemicals have higher concentrations than conventional products. Stress the fact that the chemical should last longer, saving customers money in the long run.
- Build relationships. In good times, building a relationship with a customer opens the door to success. In difficult times, it is even more important. This is true of prospects as well as current customers. Relationships are built with more frequent visits and follow-ups, postcards, as well as e-mails with suggestions that can help users. One goal is to be on a first-name basis with everyone you work with at your customers’ locations.
- Emphasize needs. Luxuries are out right now. People will put off buying everything, especially luxuries, for as long as they can. This means you have to emphasize needs. With Green cleaning products, this can be done in a variety of ways. For instance, promote the health benefits. In a school, discuss how student performance goes up when Green cleaning comes in.

Further, if switching to a Green chemical can save customers money, suggest this as one more reason they “need” the product.

- Remember that one size never fits all. Sometimes salespeople take the easy road and suggest a client select one or two products that have worked (and sold) well at other locations. This makes the salesperson’s job easier. However, what works at building A may not work as well at school C. As part of the marketing approach, recommend different products, allow users to test the products, and work with the customers to select the product(s) that works best just for them.
- Offer incentive programs. Incentive programs—where you give some sort of discounts to customers if they purchase products—can be helpful, but they can also be tricky. In an earlier recession, a major hotel chain reduced guest room rates by two-thirds to stir up business. However, after the recession ended and the chain returned to its old rates, many of the guests never returned. They became accustomed to the reduced rate and could no longer justify paying 60 percent more for the same room.

However, incentives such as discounts for referring a new customer, a “buy four, get one free” program, or added discounts for large purchases can be helpful. And when the incentive program is over, it’s over, with little customer discomfort.

American industrialists John D. Rockefeller lost a fortune in the 1929 stock market crash. He set a goal to recover all his losses before he died and rebuild his fortune. He told everyone, “I’ve been in recessions and depressions before and I know I’ll survive and be bigger than before.” And of course he was.