

Entrepreneur Guide

How to Make Money Painting Curb
Addresses for Homeowners



FORWARD

Have you ever said to yourself something like, “If only I could find a job,” or, “There has to be some way to make some extra money,” or, “If only I could make just a few extra bucks.”?

If you have, you’re not alone. In fact, I said those very things many times over. As hard as I tried to find something, it seemed like every idea was either too time consuming, too expensive, too vague, too complicated or just didn’t pay well enough.

Then I discovered curb address painting. I looked at all the angles over and over and none of my regular excuses for dismissing such ideas held any water. Curb address painting is cheap to get started in, easy to do, there are plenty of potential customers, the pay is good, and I can be my own boss. What’s not to like?!

After convincing myself that I had no legitimate excuse not to act, I did. I finally started taking the action needed to make things happen. And it did! I developed a system with a new twist on an old idea (graphically personalized curb addresses) that enabled me to make \$20 to \$50 per hour any time I wanted to. I’ve literally made thousands of dollars, and you can too!

This guide pulls together and explains all of the salient issues you need to know and understand so that you can evaluate the opportunities in curb painting, as well as how to market and sell the service should you decide to jump in. Whether you use my system or generic methods, you’ll find that it is not complicated and, with a little effort, you can’t fail.

Whatever your situation may be, I hope this guide is helpful to you, whether you choose to do curb painting or not. If you have any questions or comments, please e-mail them to me at info@expressyouraddress.com.

Sincerely,

Mike Taylor
Proprietor
Express Your Address

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Introduction

Customers are the single most important part of your business. Without customers, your business will not make any money and will not survive. That makes sales and marketing – the processes for acquiring customers – absolutely vital to your success. This booklet provides practical guidance and tips on how to sell and market Express Your Address, graphically personalized curb painted addresses.

Unfortunately, for most people selling is not an easy process to initiate because it is outside of their comfort zones. They find hundreds of reasons to procrastinate, only to start feeling defeated, without even starting. Fortunately, once “in the groove” of selling, most people build momentum and do quite well. Many find selling enjoyable and personally rewarding, not to mention financially rewarding. If you have never been in a sales position before, Express Your Address should be a great first experience for you. It is an easy service to sell, and the homeowner catalog does most of the work.

Many professional sales people listen to sales-related motivational tapes to keep them pumped up and excited about selling. You may want to try this proven technique. The key is to just get started, and then stick with it as long as you can while you have momentum. The more you do it, the easier it will be and the wealthier you will become.

Don't be afraid to try things not discussed in this guide; in fact you are encouraged to do so. You are the best judge of your local market conditions and your own abilities. If you try something and it doesn't work too well, study it, learn from it and try something else. The main thing is, do something! A poor plan well implemented is much better than a good plan poorly implemented.

Licensing & Permits

Some cities and towns have ordinances regulating curb address painting, as well as other similar forms of services. They are sometimes known to as vendor or peddler permits. While relatively few cities have them, you should check with your city officials just to be sure. Some cities that have them do not enforce them. In any case, obtaining the necessary permit is usually not expensive or difficult, and doing so gives your business legitimacy. Some curb painters choose to perform their services on a donation-basis instead, which often places them outside the jurisdiction of the ordinance. The donation-basis pricing strategy is discussed in more detail later in the manual.

Depending on your state, your business may be subject to certain state requirements. Some businesses need to be registered for tax purposes. Whether or not your activities are covered often depends on how large and formal your business becomes and the amount of revenue you generate. For example, if you perform your service as an individual and less than full-time, usually the state regulations will not apply to you. You could compare this type of situation to a person who mows lawns for a number of people, but does not really do it as a business, per se. It is once you hire employees and/or begin generating higher revenues that state laws start kicking in, including a variety of taxes.

If you are unsure whether or not certain laws apply to you, it is recommended that you discuss your situation with an attorney or other legal specialist. It is also recommended that you do not ask the regulating agency (i.e. the city, county or state) if your activities are covered by their regulations

because often times the individual with whom you speak will not truly understand the law and may give you inaccurate information. When asked, these people have a tendency to err on the “side of safety” and tell you that you are covered, even though they do not really know for sure. Be aware that government agencies are rarely accountable for what they tell people in such circumstances and you can get into trouble if you break the law, even if you acted on their comments and in good faith. By asking a knowledgeable legal professional, you can get reliable information as well as guidance on what you should do, given your particular situation.

Disclaimer

Nothing in this document is intended to provide legal advice of any kind. If you are uncertain whether any federal, state or local laws or ordinances apply to your activities, you should consult an attorney.

SWOT Analysis

When developing a strategic marketing plan, or simply contemplating marketing alternatives, it is important to assess your situation, as well as the products or services you offer, in order to determine appropriate strategies. One of the most common assessment techniques is a SWOT Analysis. A SWOT Analysis is an exercise that identifies the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of a specific company, product or service. Once these variables are known, a plan can be developed that takes advantage of key strengths, addresses weaknesses, identifies and pursues opportunities and counters threats. A simple SWOT Analysis for Express Your Address as a service to homeowners is provided below.

Strengths

- Express Your Address is new and different from other curb address painting methods.
- It offers customers numerous choices, where traditional curb painting does not.
- The graphical, self-expressive nature of Express Your Address is unique and naturally appealing to people.
- Express Your Address provides a clean and distinctive look and a consistent level of quality.
- Express Your Address offers kit owners a distinctive, professional identity, or brand name, should they choose to use it.

Weaknesses

- Express Your Address takes a little longer to paint than traditional curb address painting methods.
- Multiple colors of paint must be purchased and carried with the kit to offer the full compliment of choices.
- Sales orders for Express Your Address can not easily be taken without personal contact with the customer, due to the choices.
- Express Your Address requires a more elaborate flyer than traditional curb painting services to adequately communicate its attributes.

Opportunities

- The market potential for curb address painting is very large.

- Express Your Address is a new, unique and appealing concept that generates personal interest and often stimulates impulsive buying decisions.
- Personal selling methods usually generate high closure ratios.
- The Web offers a potentially powerful sales support and payment-processing tool.
- Because Express Your Address is not widely available, it is somewhat exclusive and can be positioned as such.

Threats

- Some cities and towns have ordinances regulating curb address painting services.
- Copycat painters are likely to emerge.

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified above will help you focus your efforts more effectively and are the basis for many of the strategies and recommendations provide in this guide.

Target Audience

Your sales and marketing strategies and tactics evolve around your target audience. In the broadest sense, any homeowner with a suitable curb or driveway surface upon which to paint the address is a potential customer. However, to maximize your sales effectiveness (and profits), you will want to narrow your target audience to homeowners in neighborhoods where the pride of home ownership is evident, and the curbs are suitable and conducive to painting, as described in the *Stenciling System Manual*.

Pride of ownership is reflected in homes that are well maintained. These homeowners tend to appreciate the functionality and refinement a curb-painted address provides their homes, especially an Express Your Address-style address. As a general rule, the more lawn ornaments there are and the more meticulous the landscaping is kept, the better prospects these homeowners are for a curb-painted address. The more modest the income level of the neighborhood, the more this rule of thumb is likely to apply. The conventional marketing wisdom is that the lower the discretionary household income, the more value-driven scrutiny there is given to \$15 to \$30 dollar decisions. The meticulous landscaping is an indicator that the homeowner places a higher value on home and property refinements.

There is a tendency for curb-painting entrepreneurs to assume that the more affluent the neighborhood, the better the opportunity to make more money. This is frequently true, but not always. Homeowners in upscale neighborhoods typically have greater discretionary income, which makes the buying decision naturally easier. However, these neighborhoods are not necessarily more profitable than modest and middle-income neighborhoods because, while you may be able to charge a little more for your service, or expect larger donations, many neighborhoods with expensive homes have much larger lots, which make them less efficient to work.

Paying close attention to the quality of the curbs is also an important consideration when targeting neighborhoods. Nice curbs make performing your service so much easier and faster, and the final results are that much better. Problem curbs only slow you down and frustrate you. Since Express Your Address has broad, universal appeal, and the homeowners' purchasing decision is often impulsive,

your sales closure efficiency should be about the same regardless of neighborhood, so you may as well target neighborhoods with nice curbs.

Product Positioning

Positioning is a marketing term that refers to how a product or service fits into the marketplace, in the mind of the customer. For example, a certain product may be marketed and advertised as providing the most features for the money, therefore offering good value to price sensitive customers. By comparison, another similar product may offer additional features and/or higher quality materials, but at a higher price. This product will likely be advertised (positioned) as a more prestigious, higher-end product, appealing to affluent buyers. Both products serve the same purpose but they are positioned to appeal to certain target audiences – one to value buyers, the other to affluent buyers. The strengths and competitive advantages of the product or service often drive positioning strategies.

Express Your Address' key competitive advantages include the fact that it is a new, exclusive and innovative style of curb address painting that offers a more refined and attractive appearance, as well as a graphical enhancement that expresses individuality. In addition, it is not widely available. These competitive advantages should allow you to earn more for your service than traditional curb painting, and you should position your service accordingly. As the proprietor and representative of the business, this means you should represent yourself and your service in a consistent manner. The best way to do this is:

- Dress and present yourself respectably.
- Act professionally, smile and be friendly.
- Take pride in your service and be confident.
- Don't lowball your price.

Marketing Message

Communicating the right message effectively to your prospective customers is a vital element of your sales and marketing. Whether you are advertising, canvassing or selling face-to-face, it is important to know what motivates your customers to buy, and to focus your message accordingly. Put yourself in their position and then ask yourself, "what's in it for me?" Put another way, what are the benefits of your service to your customers? Express Your Address offers benefits that are both functional and personal.

Functional Benefits

Research shows that three out of four homes are inadequately marked, making identification difficult. Hard to identify homes can result in missed or delayed deliveries and inconveniences to persons looking for a particular house. In emergency situations, a misidentified house could have tragic consequences if it causes a delay for fire, rescue and other emergency response teams. Therefore, the key functional benefits of a curb-painted address include:

- Greater security in times of emergency.
- Fewer missed or delayed deliveries, including everything from parcels to pizzas.
- Easier for friends and acquaintances to find the home.

It should be noted, and conveyed in promotional materials, that police, fire and rescue professionals almost unanimously endorse curb-painted addresses.

Personal Benefits

The functional benefits identified above are applicable to all forms of curb-painted addresses. However, Express Your Address offers some personal benefits that the traditional styles do not. These personal benefits can be powerful motivators. They include:

- Greater visual attractiveness and distinctiveness.
- Expresses personality and individuality.
- Something new, unique and exclusive – something that few people have. (Yet!)

Some of the symbols in the Express Your Address graphic selection can have a particularly strong personal meaning for some homeowners. For example, a homeowner with a son, daughter or spouse in the in the armed forces may be particularly moved to have the United States flag or the yellow ribbon displayed with their curb address. Christians with conviction tend to like to display their faith, making the religious symbols an attractive opportunity to do so. Whatever symbol the prospective customer may identify with, plain-painted addresses can not offer that kind of personal value and benefit that Express Your Address does.

Personal Appeals

One of the unique things about curb address painting is that it is often used for fund raising. Fund raising involves a personal appeal for financial support for a specific cause. An incentive is often used to help encourage and justify someone's support. Express Your Address is a great example of such an incentive.

If you have a specific and noble reason for making money, a "cause", presenting that cause as part of your sales message can be very effective. Common noble causes may include raising money for high school or college tuition, or perhaps summer camp. Or perhaps you are unemployed and are painting curbs to support your family while you are in between jobs. These are all noble causes that most people can identify with. Raising money for a new boat or motorcycle is probably not going to inspire many people to be generous. Unfortunately, most noble fundraising causes benefit an organization (i.e. a youth group, outreach programs, etc.) making them inappropriate for personal profit.

If you have a legitimate and worthy cause for raising money, by all means use it. But it must be genuine. Use of a phony cause for personal gain is dishonest and fraudulent and is strongly discouraged.

Miscellaneous Considerations

When developing your sales and/or marketing message, keep in mind that the purchasing decisions for Express Your Address will be impulsive for most people. They will hear and see what you are doing and will be somewhat struck by the new, unique and creativeness of the concept; and given the relatively small financial commitment, they will often buy on the spot. This is a key reason why personal selling is strongly encouraged.

Another thing to keep in mind is the qualitative way you communicate about yourself and your service – in other words, what you are saying to customers by the way you carry yourself and present yourself. For example, do you communicating a professional image by the way you dress, or by the way you interact with homeowners. Some curb painters deliberately dress to look poor and desperate, hoping to capitalize on sympathy to help close sales. Others may choose a professional, more business-like image. Because Express Your Address is a more sophisticated and elite form of curb address painting, a more professional, proud, confident and upbeat image is probably the best, but it is up to you.

Printed materials, such as fliers and brochures should be consistent with your desired image and should attempt to generate enthusiasm. More information about the use of fliers and how to conduct sales calls is provided in later sections.

Selling Methods

Once you have selected a neighborhood you need to decide how you are going to work it. You have two basic options, personal selling and canvassing, but a blend of the two approaches is the best in most circumstances.

Personal “face-to-face” Selling

It does not matter what business your are in, personal, face-to-face selling is almost always more effective than any other method of selling. Why this is true is beyond the scope of this manual – there are thousands of books on this topic alone – but here are a few reasons why this is particularly true for Express Your Address:

- Your personal presence allows your prospective customer to “size you up,” and eliminate many of the unknowns that often result in perceived risks by the homeowner. Eliminating perceived risks is half the battle.
- No flyer can make the initial impact on a prospect like you can when you introduce yourself and personally show them the Express Your Address homeowner sales catalog, illustrating the concept and all their choices.
- No flyer can answer questions and capitalize on the impulsive nature of the sale like you can do in person.

Personal selling can be very difficult for some people because it is uncomfortable for them to approach and visit with strangers. If you are one of these people, Express Your Address can be very rewarding for you, and very beneficial with respect to your professional development. Even professional sales people who talk with people on a regular basis have difficulty picking up the phone and making that first call of the day. But once they do, they get into a groove and enjoy both the process and the results.

The bottom line is this: If you want to be successful, you too are going to have to sell. Sometimes you will have to force yourself to simply grab your kit and get out and knock on that first door. Your initiative to do this will be the single biggest determinant of your success. I can not emphasize this enough. You cannot be lazy; you cannot procrastinate; you cannot look for excuses not to sell, and still be successful. Fortunately, once you make your first sales call, every sales call thereafter will be easier and easier. You can do it; you just have to go out and do it.

Selling Style

Different people develop different selling styles, and different prospects respond differently to various styles. Some people are more aggressive, while others are more passive. Some take a more factual, business-like approach to selling, while others a more informal, friendly and conversational approach. The key is to let a style happen naturally; a style that is natural for you and that you are comfortable with. It is hard to be successful trying to be something you are not, and you don't need to be.

Personal Appearance

Your personal appearance is the first thing people see when they open their door. This first impression can make a big difference on how you are perceived, even before you get a chance to say anything. Make this first impression work for you, not against you.

If you want to portray a professional image, you want to dress in a professional manner, given the nature of the service you are offering, and perhaps in some situations the caliber of the neighborhoods you are working in. For example, in a nice middle-class neighborhood it is probably reasonable to wear very casual clothes, as long as they are clean and without holes in the knees, etc. How nice your clothes should be may also depend on whether or not you plan to sell and paint simultaneously. You do not want to paint in clothes that are too nice. Generally speaking, clean jeans or shorts, a clean tee-shirt and non-shabby shoes are acceptable. A polo shirt may be appropriate for upscale neighborhoods. Also be sure your hair is clean and nicely combed, and that your hands are clean. People notice these things and they will have an impact on their impression of you, whether they realize it or not. Always avoid a sloppy or un-kept personal appearance. As a general rule, in a business situation it is better to be over dressed than under dressed.

Being appropriately dressed and groomed will go a long way for your own confidence, and ultimately your sales effectiveness.

The Sales Call

There are many things you can say to introduce yourself and your service effectively. Much will depend on your style and what flows naturally for you. Because everyone is different, it is important that you make your opening comments your own. Whatever you say, be yourself, be comfortable and be friendly.

When you knock on someone's door, keep in mind that the homeowner is probably asking himself or herself, "who is this at my door?" And, "what do they want?" Therefore, these two issues are the first things you will want to address in your opening comments. You can then present your cause (if applicable) and "pitch" your service. With this in mind, a typical sales call should include the following elements:

1. **A personal introduction.** Your personal introduction should tell your prospect who you are and where you live. This is a professional courtesy that, as a stranger, eliminates the mystery of who you are and helps put the homeowner at ease. It is a good idea make up a photo ID card and wear it around your neck. This will add an element of validity and professionalism to your presence. By telling them where you live, such as on the next block or in certain subdivision, you demonstrate an openness that is calming and that helps break down those initial barriers. If you happen to live in the neighborhood, this helps establish a personal affiliation with your prospect. If you are from outside the city, you may want to volunteer only your name.
2. **Your reason for calling on them.** This can be an explanation of your cause, if you have one (i. e. raising money for tuition). If you do not have a specific cause, your reason for calling is simply to offer the benefits of your service.
3. **A presentation of your service.** This should be a clear but brief and punchy description of your service. Since most homeowners are already aware of the purpose and functional benefits of a curb-painted address, it is better for Express Your Address entrepreneurs to focus on the personal benefits, such as the graphical features and choices.
4. **A close.** Your close is simply asking for the sale, either directly or indirectly. This is very important because many people need this nudge to make the decision to buy. If you do not ask for the sale, someone else will.

When you make a sales call, you will find that once you get the conversation going, it will tend to flow on its own from there. After you have made a few calls, you will get a feel for what works best for you. Don't be afraid to experiment. You may stumble on to some "hot buttons" that are particularly effective for you. And don't be afraid to make a mistake. The worst thing they can do is say no.

Below is an example of a how to open a sales calls, which you can modify and build on for your own needs.

*Hello, my name is John Smith; I live over on the next block. I'm out raising money for my college tuition. To do this, I am offering new and unique *graphically personalized curb-painted addresses for homeowners. As you can see [in the picture], I can paint your curb address in an attractive manner with a personal graphic of your choice. **Would you like to browse through some of the choices?*

* At this point, show them the front cover of the Homeowner Catalog binder and point your finger to the address graphic in the cover photo. The photo will grab their attention immediately, but by pointing to the graphic in the photo you will help them grasp the concept of what you are offering more quickly. Also, emphasize "graphically personalized" when you say it.

** As you are saying this, open the binder to the first two pages of graphic choices in the catalog. If you haven't rearranged the pages, these should be the "Faith" and "Fun Stuff" graphics, which are some of the most colorful and eye-catching. You can then either gesture for them to take the binder into their hands to browse (preferred), or you can slowly flip the pages for them to see their other choices. By encouraging your prospect to take the binder, you draw them in to the process.

If you do not have a cause for raising money, you could say something like:

*Hello, my name is John Smith; I live over on the next block. I am offering homeowners in your neighborhood a new and unique service – *graphically personalized curb-painted addresses. As you can see in the picture, I can paint your curb address in an attractive manner with a personal graphic of your choice. **Would you like to browse through some of the choices?*

While they are looking through the catalog, it is a good time to make a comment, like:

- Isn't this a neat idea?
- Isn't this a neat way to add some kick/personality to your address?
- People really notice and like our graphical addresses.
- Emergency responders really like addresses on curbs, and this is an attractive way to do it.

After they have had what seems like the right amount of time to look at the choices, it is time to close. Ask them "which graphic would you like?" This is usually when they will ask how much it costs. If you have a set price, you can tell them what it is. If you are taking the donation approach, you should say something like:

Well, I'm trying to raise money for school, so I'm just asking for donations. What ever you can help me with would be great. (Smile appreciatively!)

Or, if you don't have a fund raising cause, you could say:

"Well, I don't have a set price. I just ask for a good will donation." (Smile appreciatively!)

When asking for a donation, often times the homeowner will ask how much you generally get. You should answer this with a range, with the low end of the range being the least amount you'd like to get. For example:

"Usually I receive between \$15 - \$20." (Or what ever your range is.)

If they respond to your range by saying something like, "is \$10 okay?" don't be afraid to say something like...

"Usually I get between \$15 - \$20, but \$10 would be fine."

This will most often result in a donation within the range you specify. If it doesn't, graciously accept their payment and move on. If this happens too often, you may want to consider going to a set price method.

The good news is, if they ask about the price, they are interested. And once the price question is answered, it is a good time to attempt to close again. Say something like...

"So what do you think? Do you see one you like?"

It is usually at this time that you get an idea of whether or not you are going to get the sale. If a prospect is hesitant but hasn't said no, you can say something like...

"Emergency response people really encourage curb-painted addresses."

If they have a technical question or a question about their choices, you can answer it while showing them the page in the catalog with the font and color choices, as well as the additional examples and illustrations in the back of the catalog. In any case, after answering a question or after a brief conversation, and if the timing feels right, go for the close again – ask for the sale! You will be surprised at how often people just need that little prompting to say yes!

Once your prospect has decided to buy, it is a good idea to provide a reinforcing comment, something like...

"That's great. I'm sure you will be pleased."

More discussion about pricing issues is provided in the Pricing section.

Taking the Order

When the customer decides to buy, he or she will often indicate so by saying "I'll take this one," while pointing to one of the graphics in the sales catalog. You then need to visit with your customer to determine which font and colors the customer wants to use. When asking them for their preferences, it may be helpful to show them some of the examples in the back of the sales catalog. You may be asked for your opinion or the most common choices of other customers. Do not be afraid to offer your opinion and provide guidance. You are the expert and your suggestions will be welcomed.

Note: You may want to add additional pages to the sales catalog with more examples of your work. People enjoy seeing real examples and it helps validate your service.

Tips on Personal Selling

To wrap up, here are a few tips on personal sell that should help you.

- Purchase a sales-related motivational tape to listen to from time to time. This will keep you focused, pumped up and motivated, which will contribute to your success.
- Don't be intimidated by meeting new people. People are people – they too put their pants on one leg at a time. You will meet interesting people with interesting stories, so look forward to your experiences.
- Be positive, confident and upbeat. Effective personal selling is as much about attitude and friendliness as anything else.
- Pump yourself up. You have the power to change your own state of mind to one that is helpful and motivating.
- When you have momentum, don't stop selling. Go as long as you can while "you're in the groove."
- Visit with you customers. Ask questions and show a genuine interest in them. People will respond positively to you, often in dollars.
- Some people will never buy; it's just who they are. Recognize that you will experience rejection, it's part of the terrain. Don't let it get you down, just move on. If your prospect says no, there is a good chance the next one will say yes.
- If you encounter someone rude or unfriendly, wish him or her well and move on. There are too many nice people in the world to get hung up on the not so nice ones.

Canvassing

Another popular and more common method for selling curb address painting is canvassing with fliers. Canvassing is the process of going door-to-door and leaving information about your service, rather than ringing the doorbell and speaking with every homeowner. Canvassing allows you to cover more territory faster, but it is not nearly as effective. Most traditional-style curb painters who canvass leave a small flyer stating that they are offering what often sounds like a public service in their neighborhood and if they would like to participate (have their curb painted) to fill out a form or leave payment on the door. The flyers are generally low quality and often do not have personal contact information on them. Unfortunately, this method does not allow the homeowner the opportunity to know with whom they are doing business, which along with other uncertainties creates doubt and a feeling of risk.

Mass canvassing on its own is not recommended for Express Your Address. One of the key reasons is that it would be too expensive to develop and print a flyer that adequately presents the choices and colors offered by Express Your Address, especially in large quantities. In addition, low quality fliers would be inconsistent with the high quality image of Express Your Address. Mass canvassing may be more viable if the flyer is supported with a Web site that prospects can visit to learn more about the concept, view all the choices, and contact you. (This method is untried, but is under consideration for testing.)

Hybrid Method (Recommended)

For the reasons identified above, a hybrid of both personal selling and canvassing methods is recommended for selling Express Your Address. The idea is to focus on personal selling, using a flyer as a leave-behind when the homeowner is not home. The flyer should indicate that you are offering your service in their neighborhood for the next few days and to contact you if they would like to have their curb address painted at this opportune time. While the flyer will not generate as many sales as the

personal selling will, it should produce a few good leads and leaving a flyer is better than doing nothing. Fliers and their use are discussed in more detail in the *Sales Aids and Literature* section.

Productivity

Productivity is a key factor in your earnings potential. The more sales you make and the more efficiently you paint, the more money you will make per hour worked. Therefore, if you want to maximize your profits, you will want to balance your selling, painting and collecting activities in a manner that maximizes your effectiveness and efficiency.

When you first start out, you will probably be inclined to make a sale, paint the curb and then collect your money. This is fine if it is what you want to do, but it is not very efficient. As with most processes, the more you specialize and focus on a specific task for a block of time, the better and more efficient you will be at performing the task. The same applies to the three primary processes of your curb painting business: selling, painting and collecting. With this in mind, below is a common operational strategy that will help you maximize your efficiency.

Selling

Select a neighborhood and plan to work it for several days, ideally until you have covered it completely. Select neighborhoods with good curbs for painting, as explained in the *Express Your Address Stenciling System Manual*. By working the same neighborhood for several days, following up leads generated from your flyers – the ones you leave at doors when nobody was home – will be more productive. It is much easier to schedule a follow-up visit if you are still working in the neighborhood. In addition, the curbs you have already painted will serve as advertisements and potential referrals.

Perform your selling late in the afternoon, evenings and on weekends. Since most people in our society work and are not at home during the day, you will want to arrange your selling around these times for maximum efficiency. Because selling is so important and often subject to procrastination, be sure to stick with it as long as possible once you get started.

When you make a sale, avoid the temptation to paint the curb immediately. Instead, record all the details of the order on a form or in a spiral notepad. Be sure to record the customer's address, graphic, font and color selections; the price quoted or agreed to, etc. All of these details are very important to performing your job correctly and it can be very embarrassing if you make a mistake, or if you have to go back and ask the customer what they ordered because you forgot something. You may want to consider having some three-part NCR (no carbon required) order forms printed that collect the necessary information, including a place for your customer's signature. With this type of form you can document the order efficiently and leave a copy with your customer. This approach is not only effective and efficient, but it contributes to your professional image.

Even if you are using an order form, it is helpful to take a small spiral binder with you to record the outcome of your sales call for each home. It's nice to know for sure who wasn't home versus who declined to buy. By calculating your "not home" and sales closure ratios, you can better track and plan future selling strategies.

Painting

Once you have taken some orders you can plan your painting around your schedule. Even though you have some flexibility, it is best to paint your customer's curb within 24 hours. If you know when you will be painting, it is a good idea to tell your customer what to expect at the time of the order.

Collecting

Collecting payment for your service can be handled in various ways, depending on whether or not your customer is home when you complete the job. If your customer is home, you can simply collect when you are finished. If you are painting during the day, many of your customers may not be home, so you will either need to come back later or leave a payment envelope for them to mail payment to you. Another advantage of working the same neighborhood for several days is that it gives you the opportunity to collect money for completed jobs, while selling new jobs. Another option is to leave a preaddressed envelope at the door for customers whom you have not been able to reach. If you are using a three-part NCR form, you can leave another copy of the service order form – which should have your fee and their signature on it – along with the envelope. It is also helpful to leave a note or label attached to the service order form thanking your customers for their business and telling them you were unable to catch them at home and to please send payment in the envelope provided. You may even want to consider placing a stamp on the envelope for them. If your job was done on a donation basis, consider include a suggested donation range in the note, in a tactful manner, of course.

Pricing

Pricing is an important issue for all businesses. Many variables factor into pricing for various types of products and services; including issues like supply and demand, production and overhead costs, and the competitive environment, to name a few. Curb address painting prices are driven primarily by perceived value, which can vary by neighborhood. Competition is rarely a factor. Upper-middle class neighborhoods tend to offer the highest pricing potential due to higher discretionary household income.

How much you want to charge for your curb address painting services is strictly up to you. Historically, the asking price for regular curb painting has been from \$10 to \$15, and as low as \$5 many years ago. However, as discussed earlier, many curb painters leave the price up to the customer (a donation basis), especially if they have a worthy cause for raising money. Because the Express Your Address-style address is more refined and personalized, you can generally expect to charge a few dollars more than the traditional styles. Most customers will not recognize the fact that Express Your Address takes a little longer to paint, as a justification for a higher price.

The first decision you will need to make on any given day is which method you want to use to charge for your service, a set price fee or a donation basis method. In cities where curb address painting is regulated, curb painting is often done on a donation basis to avoid having to obtain a permit. It is a good idea to experiment with both ways and use the method that produces the best results. You may find that one method works better than the other does in certain types of neighborhoods. The beauty is you can switch back and forth between methods as often as you desire. (Note: This is one of the reasons why a pricing page is not included in the Homeowner Sales Catalog.)

Set Price

Given the choice, the set price approach tends to be the preferred pricing method for most curb address painters, because it is the most certain and offers the most control. If you decide to go with this pricing approach you may find yourself tempted to charge your customers based on the complexity of the graphic they select, i.e. the number of layers. This is understandable since it takes more time to paint a multi-color, three-layer graphic than it does a simple one-layer graphic. However, this approach can be a little awkward to implement and sometimes confusing to the customer. To avoid getting bogged down over a couple of dollars, it is easier and more customer friendly to use a flat rate, which can vary

as desired. A flat rate can also be more conducive to your sales pitch. For example, if your prospective customer asks you how much your service is, it is nice to be able to say...

"You have your choice of any of the graphics, and your choice of colors and font for only \$XX."

If you have a variable rate, you may find yourself in a position of saying that it depends on the graphic they choose, and then explaining which ones cost how much. Unless you mark your prices on the graphics, your customer still won't know what his or her cost will be when browsing through the catalog. This type of uncertainty can negatively impact your sales.

One advantage of the set price approach is that it provides the opportunity to offer glass reflector beads as an optional upgrade, and possibly generate a few extra dollars. Once the sale is closed, you can pitch the reflector bead upgrade with a statement such as...

"Would you like me to apply glass reflector beads to help make your address more visible at night? It is only \$X more."

Other times you may want to use the glass beads as an incentive to close the sale, for example when a prospective customer is being indecisive.

Donation Basis

If you can get comfortable with the inherent uncertainties of donation-based pricing, this method offers the potential for higher earnings. How much higher will depend somewhat on your personal skills and how virtuous your cause is for raising money. Experience shows that most homeowners will pay a donation equal to or close to the amount you would have charged anyway, and in many situations they will pay you more. That means it is very likely that you will make at least as much using donation-based pricing as you would under the set price method, and there is a good chance of earning more. Occasionally you will come across a very generous customer who is particularly generous. On the down side, it is possible that a customer will pay a donation below your expectation and below what your set fee would have been. This does not tend to happen very often, and certainly not often enough to discourage use of the donation-based approach. When it does happen it is usually innocent on the part of the customer.

Low donation amounts can be prevented in many cases, by the power of suggestion. More times than not a customer will ask how much of a donation you normally get. This is your chance to politely put them in the range of your expectation. For example, you may have a customer say, "is \$10 okay?" Your response should be something like...

"Normally donations are around \$15 to \$20, but anything you can help with is just fine. \$10 is fine."

As you can see, this is a polite and tactful way of saying you will gratefully accept their offering but that most people donate more. Because nobody wants to be perceived as cheap, they will almost always bump their donation up to the range you suggested. This situation may also work to your advantage because sometimes the amount you ultimately receive may be more than they would have been willing to pay, had the price been set at that amount. This can happen because the homeowner, at this point, has already agreed to the service and it is awkward for them to back out of the agreement.

The bottom line is, donation-based pricing makes a higher fee a possibility, while set pricing makes it an improbability.

Sales Aides and Literature

There are many materials you can develop and things you can do to promote your service to increase sales. This section presents some of the most commonly used techniques.

Fliers

Fliers are one of the most common ways of marketing curb address painting. Unfortunately they are not all that effective. Research indicates that traditional curb painters using commonly accepted methods usually get a response rate of one to four percent. In other words, for every 100 fliers distributed, between one and four homeowners will respond.

One of the most common flyer formats is a bright red, quarter-page piece of paper that is taped to the door. The flyer's message usually states that home addresses are going to be painted in the neighborhood as a service to the residence and that if they want their home included to fill in their name and address at the bottom of the flyer. The flyer will also indicate the cost, how the numbers will be painted, and some of the common benefits of a curb-painted address i.e. visibility by emergency services, etc. Often times the company or individual providing the service is not identified. These fliers are generally of low quality, and sometimes have a somewhat "scammy" feel to them.

Because Express Your Address is different from traditional curb painting and should be positioned as a more elite and personalized service, a higher quality flyer with an appropriate message is recommended. The purpose of the flyer is to generate leads and support personal selling, not for mass canvassing like the traditional curb painters do. This limited role for the flyer is partially due to the fact that Express Your Address offers so many choices it is not practical to close a sale and take an order with a flyer.

When developing a flyer, it should include the following elements:

- Attention-grabbing, benefit-driven headline.
- Picture or illustration of a real example. (Especially important for Express Your Address.)
- Clarifying information about your service, including benefits.
- Personal appeal and explanation of your fundraising cause, if applicable.
- Pricing or donation-related information
- A call to action and information on how to reach you.

A key issue to producing a flyer is the colorful, graphical nature of Express Your Address. It is difficult to illustrate the Express Your Address concept effectively without using full-page color flyers, which are relatively expensive. One possible solution is to use a flyer that incorporates Web support. The Web can be an economical way to explain and illustrate all the choices available to your customer and generate enthusiasm.

Business Cards

Business cards are a good idea, especially when a customer wants to refer your service to a friend or neighbor. They are also handy when your prospective customer wants to contact you when their spouse can be involved in the decision or choice.

The cheapest and most flexible way to produce business cards in small quantities is by laser or inkjet printing them at home on business card stock. Business card stock, both plain and those with preprinted themes are widely available at business supply and stationery

ID Cards

Photo ID cards worn around your neck are a nice touch when selling door to door. While they do not provide any tangible assurances of personal integrity, they do tend to put some homeowners more at ease. They also promote a more professional legitimacy to you and your service. Photo ID cards can be made up inexpensively at Kinkos and other similar business service centers.

If you choose to use the Express Your Address name and identity for your business activities – which as kit owner you are authorized to do – and you want to obtain digital copies of the Express Your Address logo, please send your request to support@expressyouraddress.com. Various flyer templates and other resources may be available in the future via the web site. As a kit owner, you will be notified when such items become available.

Good luck with your business!

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