

The other day I heard it again, “I got beat by price.”

By Steve Bludsworth, All-Pool Service and Supply

Other industries have faced and defeated the same problem with successful analysis and long-term changes. When the big box stores of the home improvement industry opened up, many small hardware stores feared the worst; how could they survive facing the buying power of an international competitor? Many closed, but others pulled up their boot straps and met the challenge head on and survived.

Ace Hardware is a prime example of this. When you walk into one of their stores several, not just one, sales associates personally greet you at the door and ask how they can help. They walk you to the location of the item you are looking for, find it, and ask if there is anything else they can help you with. They proudly say, “Thank you,” before walking you to the register. The person at the register says, “Did you find everything today?” and asks if you have an Ace rewards card, then proudly thanks you again for shopping with them. There are no self-service checkout lanes, no unattended scanners. Their strength is plain and simple; honest, old fashioned personal service.

What do you have to offer your customers? How about half an hour of your time to present a written assessment of their pool? In a clean shirt and pants, show your knowledge about new features that could be added, not in a sales pitch but in an information session. Manufacturers have literature you can leave with your pool owner to review later, or you can use copies of Florida Pool Pro articles written by your peers. Our industry has energy efficient pumps, new safety drain covers, heating that qualifies for a 30 percent federal tax credit and there is more. Leave price out until the issue comes up; you are there to show the value of why they have you doing their service and not some unlicensed, uneducated, uninsured non-professional taking care of their backyard center of fun.

Understand you cannot compete with low price and no customer service, and there are plenty of people willing to pay for that formula. BUT, there are more and more people willing to pay for quality service at a fair price. If they perceive they are getting something of value for their hard earned money. Every time you see your client, don't forget to confidently look them in the eye, firmly shake their hand and proudly say, “Thank you.”