



everybody *wants* a Discount

by
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Anyone who is new to this industry, will soon discover that there are customers who will do just about anything to get away with paying less than full price. This month we'll take a look at the "Security Bargain Hunters" and their various methods of operation.

The Add-on:

This is when the customer waits until you finish adding up his bill, then decides that he'll take those duplicate keys (that you suggested ten minutes ago) after all, in the hopes that you will either forget or just not bother to add them to his bill. While it may not be done on purpose in some cases, I'd be willing to bet that most of the time they know exactly what they're doing. My first few years in the business, I used to fall for that one a lot.

The Poor Mathematician:

This is the guy who repeatedly changes the scope of the work and expects you to be able to rattle off prices off the top of your head. Every time you give him a price for something else he will come back with a total, in question form... and it will ALWAYS be low. For example: You: That will be a forty dollar service

charge, twenty five dollars labor, and thirty five dollars for the lock. Him: So, about ninety bucks right? If you slip and say yes, he's got you. He'll swear up and down that the price you told him was ninety dollars.

The I've Only Got:

This one's pretty much self explanatory. You tell him fifty and they tell you that they only have thirty five on them. This can be side-stepped by telling them that you'll be happy to follow them to the closest ATM. Trust me. Seventy percent of the time, you won't have to follow them anywhere. The money is already in their pocket.

The Poor Mouth:

Play this one by ear. I'd hate to have some little old lady eating cat food because she had to pay me her last seventy bucks to let her into her house. (How'd you like to have that come up in conversation when your checking in at heaven's gate.) Then again, this might be one of those little old ladies with two hundred grand stuffed into a mattress.

The I can send you lots of business:

I wish I had a buck for every time a

customer looking for a price break, told me about all the work he could send my way in the future. In fourteen years I can only think of a handful of times when these promises ever panned out. Sometimes it seems like everyone who calls a locksmith is under the impression that they are worthy of a discount. Their reasons are endless. "My friend owns a body shop." "I work for a Realtor and they're always calling a locksmith." And my all time favorite; "I drive a tow truck and I can call you whenever I can't get into a car myself."

I'm always curious, If they have so much lock work to bargain with, who's been doing this lock work up until now, and why did they call him instead of me?

The Robot:

Once, on a commercial job, I had the nerve-racking experience of dealing with one of those customers who keeps adding to the things that he wants you to do, all the while expecting you to keep him apprised of the running total as you go. What made this particular experience stand out from the rest was that every time I would tell him a price for ANYTHING,



his immediate response, every time, without fail, was either "Is that my price?" or "What's my discount?" It was like he was programmed by one of those subliminal message tapes. I had never met this guy in my life, but for some reason, he truly believed that he was entitled to a discount.

Senior Citizens are another group who think that they are (regardless of their financial situation) entitled to a discount simply because of their age. If I offer a senior citizen discount, I must give it to all senior citizens, even the ones who have more wealth than I will probably see in my lifetime. If I'm doing work for an elderly person whom I feel really doesn't have a lot of money, I'll usually do something like knock a little off the bill, give them the duplicate keys for free, or fix something extra "on the house."

The ultimate bargain hunters are the people who already know you. If you ever want to know how many "friends" and "relatives" you've got, let word get out that you're a locksmith, especially if it's your company. Owning your own locksmith business brings every obscure relative and acquaintance out of the woodwork, even better than putting in a swimming pool.

Everybody wants you to do them a "favor", from the cousin (whom you've neither seen nor heard from since a wedding about ten years ago,) who's locked his keys in his car at 1:00 in the morning, at some bar on the other side of town, to the friend who has a sister, who's boyfriend's brother's friend lost the keys to his "Vette." Not only do they want a discounted rate, but they are somehow under the impression that you should be falling all over yourself to thank them for the work.

Here are a couple of incidents that remain burned into my memory.

Situation One: Niece expects (not wants, expects) Uncle Locksmith to drive to the other side of the city to let her boss into his car at no charge, so she can score brownie points.

Situation Two: Very good friend's wife calls and says, "Remember when I did you a favor and you said you owed me one? Well I owe So-N-So a favor and he needs his locks changed. Can you do it for him for free and just consider us even?" (No. I'm not making these up!)

Situation Three: A guy you know from the old neighborhood, locked himself out of his business and when you give him the price, he comes off with, "Man, I thought you were my friend?"

Friend? The last time I heard from him was three years ago, (ironically, he needed a locksmith then, too).

When it comes to doing work for friends, I've pretty much divided them into four basic groups.

A Third To Half Off Friends: These are people that you really like. Friends and relatives that you are in constant communication with. Depending on how much you like them, you may choose to extend this category to their immediate family, like mother, father, son and daughter. (Siblings living outside the home are optional.)

Twenty Percent Off Friends: These are people who aren't really "close friends" but you do know them well enough that you don't want to insult them by saying, in essence, "You ain't nobody to me." A token twenty percent is usually enough to keep them from talking about you behind your back.

Pay What Everybody Else Pays Friends: At the top of this list are people you've given a break to and then later down the road when you needed them, they charged you the rack rate. Also included in this category are people that in the past you've given a sweetheart deal to and they still cried about the price, and the "friend of a friend of a friend."

I'm Too Busy, Call Somebody Else Friends: This is everyone from the guy who wants to do something that borders on the illegal and he thinks that he has a better chance with you because "you know him." to the locked out neighbor who you just know, had your car ticketed a couple of years ago, that weekend that you were dropping a new motor into it on a public street.

These are just a few examples of ways that people will try to take advantage of you in the course of doing business. There will be times when you will give someone a discount. There will probably be times when you will do or give something at no charge. Just make sure that it's because you want to, not because you were tricked into it. **TRN**



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