

- **Job Problem News –**

- **How to Approach a Job**

**Complaint** – No one likes to deal with problems whether you are the customer or the product representative. But dealing with problems in a timely manner and correctly can make the difference between having a customer for life or losing future business.

- **Key is showing them some empathy and courtesy.** You must realize that the customer didn't ask for or pay for their problem; whether real or perceived, it is a real problem to the customer.

- **Timing** – It is critical to get back to the customer **within 24 hours** of them reporting their complaint. You don't have to have any answers for them. The longer you wait the less reasonable the customer will be and the bigger the problem gets.

- **Listen** - It is important to give them an opportunity to vent and share their problem with you. Be courteous and show empathy whether you think their complaint is valid or not. Listen to their story. **Tell them you are sorry they are having this problem** (whether it is legitimate or not).

- **Qualify** – Repeat the key facts they stated and ask any unanswered questions. **You should have a form for complaints** to remind you of the info you need such as contact info, product type and quantity, when and where they bought it, installer info, application type, problem description, etc.

- **Response** – If it is a familiar problem or false expectation, then in a courteous way, explain the situation and options (always offer more than one option; never only one choice). Most complaints can end here if handled properly. If it is beyond your expertise or if the customer is not happy with your answer, then ask them to mail or fax you a copy of their receipt for the purchase of the product with the installer contact info. Better yet, give them your complaint form to fill out and send it with the invoice. If the installer bought the material, then tell them to have the installer contact you and provide a copy of the invoice with the form so you can start the process of investigating the problem. **Key is to ask the customer**

**to follow up** with substantiating the purchase of the product. Often you won't hear back from them. Sometimes they will discover they didn't buy it from you! There is always more to the story....

- **Follow-up** – If you promise to follow-up, do it when you said you would, or pay the price of losing credibility and creating a bigger problem.
- **Win-Win** – In the end, you want to have a win-win situation. You don't have to agree with the customer, but if you are professional and timely, **and let them know you are going to be there for them to do what is right and reasonable**, they will respect you for it. It is my experience that when these basic rules are followed I end up with better relationships with my customers, which results in more business. I can't tell you how many times I have heard installers say they do everything they can to avoid a certain supplier because of how they handled a situation with them 10 years ago! That one bad experience could **literally result in thousands and thousands of dollars of lost business** to a supplier;

whether they were in the right or not.

- **Quality Control News**–
  - **Movement Joints (formerly called Expansion Joints)** – Movement joints are essential for the success of most tile installations. They are the **leading cause of most tile failures** when they are left out, or not installed correctly.
  - **Movement joints allow relief** from the naturally occurring movements in our environment to prevent unwanted cracking. That is why there are joints in sidewalks to separate one section from another so they can move independent of each other without affecting the other section. If there were no joints, the sidewalks would create their own natural movement joints by cracking; likely in a way that it doesn't look good. Movements can be caused by fluctuations of the earth called **settling**, or caused by live loads on structures that contribute to **deflection**, or caused by temperature differences within the same product or different adjacent products called **thermo movements**, or caused by

products absorbing moisture called **moisture movements**.

- **Per TCA EJ171-03 movement joints should be located** in every direction of the tile installation 24' to 36' interior and 8' to 12' exterior. If it is an interior installation exposed to direct sunlight or moisture then movement joints should be placed every 8' to 12'. Movement joints should be placed where tilework abuts restraining surfaces such as perimeter walls, dissimilar floors, curbs, columns, pipes, ceilings, and where changes occur in backing materials. That means and includes around the floor perimeter of the room and from one adjacent wall to the next.
- **Caution** - It is up to the project architect to have the project **engineer determine the type and placement** of the movement joints; no one else is qualified. **If the installer fails to install the movement joints**, then the installer will be considered at fault. The courts normally rule "installation constitutes acceptance"; the installer should know better. Even if the architectural specifications and plans don't show where to place movement joints.

- **Training News -**

- **University of Ceramic Tile And Stone (UofCTS) campus is OPEN!** - In March the first online course became available called [\*Understanding the Basics of Ceramic Tile\*](#). It is a comprehensive, interactive and enjoyable journey for people who are new to, or not current with, ceramic tile. It covers the fundamentals, from manufacturing, to product types, to installation, and gives useful selling techniques that are key to selling more ceramic tile. Once the course is completed students can print out a diploma. Managers can monitor their employees' progress.
- **In addition**, just released is a course on **Sexual Harassment** for both employees and supervisors. Titled [\*Myths, Facts, Impacts of Sexual Harassment\*](#), the course was created by industry expert Anderson-davis and complies with federal standards.
- **Courses can be customized** for companies interested in delivering their own message. For more information go to [www.ctasc.com/UofCTS\\_On](http://www.ctasc.com/UofCTS_On)

[line Courses/Online Courses/.](#)

- **Marketing News –**

- **Keeping Customers –** Studies indicate that while there is a 1-in-2 chance of getting new business from current customers, there's only a 1-in-20 chance of landing business from a brand new contact. Sure, you have to get new customers, but it pays to focus on the people who are most likely to bring you business. *Read [Sales Don't Just Happen: 26 Proven Strategies to Increase Sales in Any Market](#). By Stephan Schiffman (Dearborn Trade Publishing, 2002)*
- **Have you asked your customers lately “How am I doing? Is there anything else I can do better to earn more of your business?” – CTaSC** now **offers** the service of providing **web based surveying**. It is easy and enjoyable for those taking the survey. At the end CTaSC will provide you with data and graphs of the survey results. Learn more about this service and take a sample survey to experience it for yourself at [www.ctasc.com/CTaSC\\_Services/Marketing/Survey\\_Service/](http://www.ctasc.com/CTaSC_Services/Marketing/Survey_Service/).
- **CTaSC also offers** full **marketing services** including

brochures and advertising development, videos, and website design.

- **Business Planning News –**

- **Is there enough information or too much?** – Here we are with a glut of information coming from computers, emails, websites, and all the other gadgets that give us information almost instantaneously, which is expected today. But are we getting the right information at the right time? It seems to be the same old problem that information needed to make the best decisions isn't readily available to those who can benefit from it the most.
- **What's the solution?** It's back to basics. First you need a plan to include the goals, and the objectives that lead to those goals. The plan needs to specifically detail the process and the timing, and the methods to measure the results. Timing is of the essence to measure those results to make adjustments in fine tuning and perpetuating the plan. It's key to success.

- **Economic Forecast** – "An increase in work for architects is a sign that the construction industry may recover in the second half of the year," according to Kermit Baker the chief economist of the American Institute of Architects, as reported by the San Diego Union Tribune on 5-10-03. Baker further stated that nationally residential design work is showing very strong growth, while nonresidential work is showing signs of improvement. Baker stated "Home improvement and remodeling may overtake new construction in this decade," considering that the \$214 billion remodeling industry is catching up with new construction. About 6.5 million households are buying new or existing homes annually, representing about 6 percent of all households. As the Baby Boom group born between 1946 and 1964 nears retirement age, housing demand is already shifting toward second-home purchases and interest in assisted-living accommodations. For more information go to [http://www.ctasc.com/Resources\\_and\\_Links/Economic\\_Forecast/](http://www.ctasc.com/Resources_and_Links/Economic_Forecast/).
- **Stone Knowledge News** –
  - **Use a Moisture Barrier on all floors on grade** – is one of MIA's Ten Command-ments for Successful Stone Floor Installation. Moisture coming up through a floor slab seeks

the quickest and easiest possible pathway to evaporate. Often, the veining or microcracks in the structures of some stones provide that path. Moisture dissolves all the salts from the earth, substrate and stone and carries them to the surface leaving a residue or causing a crystallizing that can cause deterioration in the stone. *For more information refer to the MIA Design Manual.*

- **Something to Think About....** –
  - **Circuit in 3-D almost a reality** - Engineers at the University of California Berkeley are developing an ink-jet printing technology that will print fully assembled electric and electronic gadgets in one go. *Article in San Diego Union Tribune.*
- **Ceramic Tile And Stone Consultants ([www.CTaSC.com](http://www.CTaSC.com))**
  - **Is a National Service Company** providing Job Problem Investigations, Quality Control Services, Training programs (online and onsite), Marketing Research and Outsourcing Services, and Business Planning.