Door-Knocking & Appointment-Setting
One of the most widely used methods of acquiring customers in a particular neighborhood is by directly speaking with homeowners door-to-door. We’re not going to sugarcoat it. Knocking on doors can suck. Alas, often it is a necessary evil of the position. With the lack of training most salesmen get in this industry, knocking on doors can be like pulling teeth. Fortunately, we’re going to teach you our methods and techniques to not only make the process more bearable and less intimidating, but to also increase your success ratio. We want you to be able to knock less doors and get more appointments.

You might have the type of manager who says, “Go get ‘em! You should knock 100 doors a day, in the freezing rain. On a holiday. Even if you have the flu and your legs are broken.”

Uh....no. When we began working in the storm restoration industry, that was the answer to everything. Not making enough money? Knock more doors. Don’t have enough appointments? Knock more doors! Hate knocking doors? Just knock more doors! The good news is, you don’t have to kill yourself knocking doors. Here are some methods of door knocking that don’t take a lot of time, are more effective than going after 100 doors a day, and won’t make you hate your life.

First of all, **knock at appropriate times**. When are people home? Considering the average person works a 9-5 job, knocking doors in your neighborhood from 9 am until 4 pm is probably not the best use of your time. “I knocked for SEVEN HOURS today and barely talked to anybody!” you’ll cry out in despair. Don’t spin your wheels. Work smarter, not harder. The best time to get ahold of most people on weekdays is in the evening, usually between 5 and 8, and on weekends during the morning and early afternoon when a lot of people are not working and have not yet gone out and about for the day. We recommend not knocking much later than 8 or 8:30 pm to be respectful of peoples’ time. In the summer it is only just getting dark at that time, so it is a perfect window.
**Break it down.** What is your goal? If your goal is to get 10 appointments lined up each week, then according to the averages of 1 appointment per 10 contacts, you will want to make 100 contacts each week. One hundred might sound daunting, but it’s not. Let’s say you work six days a week (it’s always good to take a “mental health” day and relax). If you knock a little bit every day, that means you only need to knock a very reasonable 17 doors each day to reach 100 for the week. Knocking on 17 doors shouldn’t take you more than an hour or two, depending on how many people you end up speaking to. You can also designate certain days of the week that you dedicate your evenings to setting up appointments. For example, you might choose Saturday, Monday and Wednesday. With a goal of setting up 10 appointments, you would need to knock on roughly 33 doors on each of those three days, which is still very reasonable and not very time-consuming. Instead of making the process of setting up appointments a big ugly task that drags on all day long, break it up and make it manageable.

**Use a system.** Be organized about your prospecting. Track your stats. Carry an iPad (or a notebook if you don’t have one – but iPads look much more professional and are more efficient) and log everything you do. Keeping detailed notes on an Excel sheet or notepad application about each address you touch on and what the interaction was will help you keep track of who you have reached and which houses can be touched again. It should look something like this:

Olive Street
6100  LC Jody
6102  NH
6104  NH (aluminum)
6106  SET Brad Andersen
6108  NI
6110  LC, nice
6112  spoke with son, Eric. LC
6114  NH
6116  SET Alex & Jessica Thompson
6118  rude
6120  Judy – nice, wants to talk to husband, LC – return after 5pm
6122  house falling apart / junky
6124  renter, LC

List the street name and type in every house number you knock on. If someone is not home, type NH next to the house number so you know you need to go back to that house later. If someone answers but says they are not interested, type NI. If you talked to the wife and she insisted you come back when her husband was home, make a note of that. If the appointment was set, type SET with the homeowner’s name. If they were friendly but didn’t take the bait for an appointment and you left them a card, type LC. If someone was a crazy asshole that you never want to speak to again, type “crazy asshole that I never want to speak to again.” You get the idea.
If you are working in an area that has recently been hit by a large hail or wind storm, the area will be swarming with contractors taking advantage of the opportunity. You’ll see many trucks with ladder racks perusing the city, dozens of different company signs in homeowners’ yards, and other salesmen canvasing neighborhoods doing the same thing you’re doing: getting business. How can you set yourself apart from your competition?

Call it unfair, call it superficial, but whether you like it or not, people will first judge you by your appearance. That’s the only thing they have to work with upon first meeting you. When you picture your average contractor, what do they look like? All too often, pretty rough around the edges. A guy in faded, torn jeans, worn t-shirts with cut off sleeves, with a generally unkempt appearance and seemingly permanently dirty hands, and either chewing tobacco in their lip or a carton of Marlboro Reds in their shirt pocket. Let’s say this person approaches you on the street or knocks on your door. What is your first impression or reaction? If it’s to pretend you’re not home or lock the door, that salesman is off to a bad start.

Simply by maintaining a professional and clean appearance, you put yourself leaps and bounds ahead of a lot of the roofers out there. Wear khaki pants (khaki shorts are acceptable in the summer when the temperature is brutal), a clean polo (preferably with your company name on the chest), and nice brown work boots. Keep your clothes clean. It doesn't take more than a day or two of climbing around on roofs for you to be a stinky, sweaty mess with chalk and tar all over your pants.

Wearing a lanyard around your neck with identification makes people feel more comfortable when you approach the door. Keep your hair and facial hair trimmed and neat. Smile and be friendly.

If you smoke, never do it in your neighborhood, and chew gum to make sure your breath doesn’t smell like cigarettes. Keep deodorant and body spray in your vehicle so freshen up on hot summer days when you get a little ripe.

Never blare loud music or speed down the street in your neighborhood. Be respectful of the neighbors. All too often a contractor will be cruising through the area they are working in blasting obnoxious rap music with his arm hanging out the window holding a smoldering cigarette. It just looks bad. Be polite, respectful, and professional. These small efforts make an enormous difference to a homeowner who has to choose who they are going to talk to.
Setting up appointments.
Do’s and Don’ts of Door-to-Door Success

Before we dive deep into effective approaches and objection-handling, let’s first establish some ground rules of door-to-door marketing so that you can avoid the biggest mistakes most reps make and line up appointments faster and easier right off the bat. The following do’s and don’ts are a foundation for door-knocking success.

Don’t:

The first rule about approaching homeowners is do not sell at the door. Meeting a homeowner for the first time and then telling them you can get them “a free roof” from their insurance company sounds like a sketchy scam. You are there simply to set up an inspection, nothing more.

The second rule is do not do an inspection on the spot. You may encounter a homeowner that says, “Well can’t you just jump up there right now and let me know if I have damage or not?” Your immediate gut reaction might be, “Awesome! This guy is already into it.” Resist the temptation for three reasons:

1) Dropping everything and doing the inspection on the spot gives the impression that you have so little going on, that you have a lot of time to answer anyone’s beck and call. Somebody who is good at their profession should be busy; too busy to do things on the fly.
2) By scheduling an appointment, you are actually creating an opportunity to build trust and a positive impression of your reliability as a professional, because you have an opportunity to demonstrate to your customer that you are a person who follows through by being there when you said you would be there.
3) The second time they meet you, you are a familiar face. This gives you two interactions with that person instead of just one, and it helps you in your mission to build rapport with that person.

You don’t need to be a greasy, silver-tongued salesman. In fact those types of individuals do not experience long-term success. People are much more receptive to someone who is friendly, casual, and laid back.

When you approach a homeowner, your general disposition needs to be friendly, light, confident, and relaxed. Don’t treat it like a big deal. The more pressure you put on yourself, the more pressure you put on the homeowner, and that does not end in getting an appointment set. Being cool, confident, and collected is pertinent to having success at the door. Your internal attitude when asking for appointments is like, “Everyone gets a free inspection; there’s no reason for anyone to not want one.” Do not be needy! The more desperate you appear, the worse your results are going to be. It is a funny and ironic paradox, but the less you seem to care about getting the appointment, the easier it is to get it.
Don’t get straight to business. If the door opens and you immediately go into wide-eyed robotic salesman mode, blurting out your spiel like a cold, memorized script, and streaming all your words together like you forgot about the space bar, people are not going to want to listen to anything you have to say. Casually introduce yourself, and give them a chance to respond to you before you go into the reason you are there.

Do:

Be aware of your body language. Do you look nervous? Squash any nervous ticks you might have, like saying “um” a lot, talking too fast, or doing something weird with your hands. Casually hold your notebook or iPad to the side. Maintain a relaxed posture. Don’t stand directly in the doorway, as that position is subconsciously threatening. Give the homeowner some space, and be relaxed. Be sure to at least ask them how they are doing or offer that you hope you are not interrupting their dinner before going into your pitch.

Always offer two times. If you simply ask if you can stop by on Wednesday to do your inspection, and the homeowner’s kids have soccer practice on Wednesday, they’ll just say they’re busy on Wednesday. Soccer practice might only be from 3:30-5:00, but without offering specific times, their natural reaction will be to just generalize that they are “busy” on Wednesday. However, if you say, “Would 4:30 or 6:00 work better for you on Wednesday?” they will recognize that while they will be busy at soccer practice until 5, they would be available by 6. Likewise, if you ask a homeowner if you can do your inspection at 6 pm, and they don’t get home until 7 pm, their response cannot be anything but a “no, six o’clock doesn’t work.” If you offer two times, such as 6 or 7, they have an option.

Offering two times also results in an answer that cannot simply be a “no.” If you only say, “Would 5:30 on Tuesday work?” a homeowner can reply with just a flat “no.” Nos do not allow room for exploring the real objection, and makes it difficult to proceed. Offering two times encourages the homeowner to give a valid reason to why a particular time may or may not work, aiding you in finding a time that would work and uncovering and handling any objections they may have.

Ensure the decision maker is present. If you speak with the wife at the door, it is wise to ask for a time when both she and her husband will be home, because it is not uncommon for a spouse to not want to make any decisions without the other spouse’s approval, and it is easier to get a signed deal with both decision makers present.

Completing an inspection and going through the presentation without the decision-maker present means that 9 times out of 10 the deal will not get signed while you are there (or cancelled after you leave), and when the decision-maker arrives home, the spouse will do their best to explain everything you told them, leaving huge holes in the “story,” misinterpreting information you gave them, and mis-
-construing the insurance process you so diligently walked them through while you were there. This results in the decision-maker shaking their head in confusion, and saying, “Let’s just call our insurance company,” or “I’ll just get some bids.”

Do not waste your time and energy by delivering the perfect presentation for naught, and make sure you are able to complete your inspections when both homeowners are present by scheduling it that way ahead of time. It allows everyone to be on the same page and get the same information, and helps you get the deal signed on the spot.

This might sound strange, but when I am canvassing a neighborhood, I act as bored and unexcited as humanly possible when approaching homeowners. Almost as if I don’t want to be knocking on their door just as much as they don’t want ME knocking on their door. My attitude is literally, “I’m really sorry, I hate knocking people’s doors. This is just what I have to do,” (cue eye roll), and the reason it works is because you are now separating yourself from the super salesy reps who try to be as cheerful, overtly smiley and “likable” at the door as possible in an effort to try to “win” their homeowners over, which is just annoying and simply doesn’t work.

**Be as casual as possible.** Don’t act nervous, excited, over-zealous, or desperate. You should be standing there, leaning on the fence post like you’re hot and tired and unexcited, and as if you really don’t care if they set up an appointment or not because it really doesn’t matter. Think of it as a push-away. You aren’t there to sell them on anything or to convince them to do anything one way or another. Your position is simply letting them know a fact about the situation of their neighborhood, i.e. there is hail damage from the storm, and that your job is to inspect all the homes out there over the course of the next couple of weeks. This results in more of a “shrug, I don’t see why not, go ahead and take a look” response, versus, “Uh...I think we’re good, no thanks…”

The greatest irony of all is that the less you seem like you “need” appointments, the more appointments you’ll get.
Humor & Rapport:

Each of you are going to have your own unique personalities, and some techniques that might work for one person may not necessarily come naturally to the next person. Use these approaches as they feel comfortable and suited to you.

Personally, I love using a bit of humor at the door based on the current circumstances. It gives me just one additional sentence or exchange with that homeowner that has nothing to do with the sales approach, and more to do with building rapport to help break the ice. Here are a few examples:

It’s the middle of the summer and 100 degrees. I knock on the door and the homeowner answers. I say,

“Hey, how’s it going? Don’t get too close – I’ve been out here all day, I probably don’t smell awesome, haha.” They always chuckle and say, “It’s no problem, how can I help you?” Then go into your approach.

“How, how’s it going? Don’t worry, I’m not a Jehova’s Witness, haha.”

“I’m selling Girl Scout cookies! Just kidding.” This is especially humorous if you’re a full-grown man.

“I thought I smelled BBQ, I was hoping to catch you in time for dinner!”

Use your instincts. Some people you just know aren’t going to be receptive to a joke like the Jehova’s Witness one, or a joke at all. Make it casual, and go into the, “Yeah, I really hate to bother you, I was just...” like usual.
Now that we’ve established a foundation for general door-knocking success, let’s dive into the nitty gritty. Next we will cover 8 word-for-word door-knocking approaches that actually work. The goal is to arm you with approaches you can start using right away to line up more appointments on the spot faster and easier. Ultimately we want you to be able to spend less time knocking doors and more time signing deals and enjoying some freedom.