



Sightings



The Longview Group, LLC

INSIGHTS...IN SIGHT

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UPCOMING SEMINARS

A/E/C Essentials & Proposals

Washington, DC
May 14 & 15, 2009

Special seminar for the
SMPS North Florida Chapter.

Powerful Proposals

Jacksonville, Florida
Wednesday, May 21
8:00 am — Noon

For more information, go to:
www.longview-group.com/seminars.html



Softer Side of Service

by Dennis Schrag

In these competitive times, client service is critical.

My water softener went out. Living in a semi-rural area with a community well means very hard water. No soft water and the dishwasher does not clean. No soft water and the washing machine turns white clothes to grays. When I purchased the softener two years ago, I bought an extended warranty. Both the unit and its warranty were overpriced. The big box national retailer with its own brand of appliances had a water softener that was highly rated by *Consumer Reports*.

When the service appointment was made, they promised me a reminder telephone call the night before the technician was to show up. Thursday night – no call. Service breach No. 1. On Friday, the service technician was to show up between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. I was thrilled to know I had to hang around home for hours on end waiting for something to happen. Service breach No. 2.

At 7 a.m. Friday, I called the retailer's service

line and asked to have my appointment confirmed. It was confirmed but they could not narrow the window of when the technician would arrive. There was a 15-minute wait for the call to be answered by a live person. Service breach No. 3.

The appointment scheduler promised a call by 8 a.m. to let me know where I was on the technician's call list that day. With that information, I might be able to narrow the appointment window. No call. Service breach No. 4.

During the day, I called three more times to get some idea when the technician might show up. Each time I was told the same thing, "Your technician will be there between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m." I told the last one that it was 3:30 p.m. and I was waiting. "Yes sir, your technician will be there between 8 a.m. and 5 pm." The technician was *not mine*. Service breach No. 5. If the

The Longview Group, LLC
3 Longview Knoll
Iowa City, IA 52240

Tel: 319.351.6510
Free: 866.351.6510
Fax: 319.351.6520
info@longview-group.com

www.longview-group.com



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technician were mine, they would have been there at 7:30 a.m.

At 5:05 p.m. I called. I was not a happy camper. The response: “Your technician will be there between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.” I explained that it was after 5 p.m. I explained I was very unhappy. The expletives are not included here.

I demanded to talk with a supervisor. Eric could not explain what happened. Service breach No. 6. He was anxious to make another appointment for a week later, sometime between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. I refused. I asked him for the number for the local service technician provider manager. He told me they don’t usually provide that number. After a few more expletives, he gave me a number. I called it. It was in Milwaukee. I am in Iowa. Service breach No. 7. The guy in Milwaukee gave me a number in Illinois for someone who *might* service my area. No answer. Service breach No. 8 with more expletives.

I called the local store manager who gave me a special service “hotline.” This is the number you call when your appointment has not been fulfilled. It must happen a lot. The person who answered offered no explanation, but did inform me her records show that a new appointment was made for the following Monday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. I politely asked, “Just when were you planning on letting me know about my *new* appointment? She did not know how to answer. Service breach No. 9.

The story goes on and on. One service failure after another. What are the chances that I will ever buy anything at the big box national department store retailer with its own brand of appliances?

I recently read about massive layoffs at appliance manufacturers. I guess sales are off because the economy is weak. I guess any store that sells appliances could use all the sales they can get. I’ll wash my dishes or my clothes by hand before I go back to that big box retailer. You might too after reading this. The news about poor service travels quickly.

How is your customer service in these competitive times? Do you answer your phone promptly? Do you keep appointments? Are service providers trained to provide real service? Do they have helpful information? Are your service silos dismantled? It’s the “softer side” of your business that makes you competitive in tough times.

Top Ten List For Better Proposals

1. Do your homework before the proposal hits the streets.
 - a. Interview and listen to the client about their needs/priorities and concerns.
 - b. Build the relationship.
2. Manage the proposal like a project...have a plan and a schedule and stick to it.
3. Do a go/no-go early---default NO GO....no more than one day after you get the RFP.
4. Design a unique and appealing cover....it has to be all about them.
5. Less is better—no boilerplate; no brochures.
6. Short words, sentences, paragraphs.
7. Provide information in same sequence as RFP; provide index/tabs, page numbers.
8. Keep resumes short and informative to this project.
9. Include an executive summary or penetrating cover letter listing benefits or your approach.
10. Frame the text — use a good lay out with white space
 - a. Use color and graphics; have powerful captions that are benefit statements.



WHAT IS THE LONGVIEW GROUP, LLC?

Seeking more efficiency and effectiveness in your professional service business? The Longview Group, LLC provides you INSIGHTS through training, on-the-job coaching, expert counsel, and extra-hands services.



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