

## C&I Opens Doors for Dealers



Some time ago, the water quality treatment industry did a good thing: it made the natural move to include commercial and industrial (C&I) applications into its customer base. As dealers sought out ways to grow their businesses, residential sales began to make way for businesses such as hotels and factories. Which is not to say that the residential market is a thing of the past—actually, it remains the top money-making aspect of the business, according to *WQP's* most recent reader survey.

Dealers continue to actively seek out new customers, but many may not know where to look. Unfortunately, there is no one specific magical place that will have all of your new customers standing there waiting for you to sell them your product. However, a little ingenuity and know-how will have you turning over new stones and finding new prospects in places you may not have thought about.

By popular demand, this issue is dedicated to those dealers who already have made a huge success for themselves in the C&I marketplace, to those dealers craving more C&I knowledge and to those who will use it as a stepping stone to new markets.

To get this issue rolling, I asked *WQP* readers including engineers, owners and managers to answer some questions regarding their involvement in the C&I arena.\* What I received was a great response that dealers—92 percent of our readers who responded to the survey, to be exact—already were involved in the commercial market and 73 percent were utilizing the industrial side. Many of them have had their businesses involved in C&I for more than 20 years. Applications that dealers reported selling to ranged from car washes to cooling towers and restaurants to hospitals. Cold calling and referrals were named as the best ways to acquire these new clients. Also, growth opportunities were cited as the best reason for including C&I clients in your business plan.

Some dealers have found this marketplace to be much different from residential as far as the knowledge, skill base and experience one would need to participate in such projects. Others have commented that they just “simply are bigger systems.” Educational efforts in the industry have come a long way as well as the industry addressing such issues as C&I standards. I think as with most things, experience is what will drive a dealer in the right direction for his business. Page 8 begins the first of several articles discussing options, concerns / issues and opportunities in the C&I arena.

It seems as though a majority of dealers still are seeing most of their profits coming from residential sales, but it would be smart for business if dealers would find their C&I niches in their communities. The best advice given right from our readers? Plan ahead, understand your company's and your products' limitations, pay attention to details and remain in constant contact with the customer.

Happy Prospecting!

*Wendi*

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\*Survey conducted in April 2003 of *WQP* readers and had a 33 percent return rate.

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