



# ***The First Rule of Marketing... is Your Product and Service Any Good?***



The **majority** of concrete contractors **have** the **quality** of their **product** down. They can build a tilt-up building, concrete home, basement, pool deck, or decorative driveway -whatever their particular specialty. These contractors have a good product and they are continuously working to improve it. The **service** part of the equation **is where** a high Percentage of concrete **contractors fail.** [Continue >](#)



The 'service part' is the part of the job that happens before the job starts, during the construction of the project, and after the job ends.

## **An example of service before the job starts:**

A concrete company in Perris, Ca, High Grade Form Inc., builds house slabs for residential tract builders in rapidly growing San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

*"This has absolutely nothing to do with concrete work, and everything to do with service."*

When a builder calls the office for a proposal on a new project, estimator Bill Tibbetts tells the purchasing agent the day and time we will pick up the plans. When the plans are picked up he calls the purchasing agent and tells her we received the plans and the day we will be submitting our proposal - and then he does it.

According to Tibbetts, "This small gesture becomes one thing the purchasing agent doesn't have to worry about, when she will receive our proposal. Many purchasing agents have told me they have to call contractors several times just to get plans picked up, let alone get a bid back.

"This has absolutely nothing to do with concrete work, and everything to do with service."





Your website, brochures, direct mail, and other pure marketing efforts should be another supporting representation of your great product and service. Without the great product and service to back it up, your marketing efforts will quickly be exposed as a sham and prove futile. Great service is an integral component of great marketing!

Another example of service before the job starts: The Ultimate Edge in Forney Texas (near Dallas) does high-end acid staining projects. The owner, Cindy Hamm, meets with the homeowner and the builder for a pre-pour meeting before the slab is poured, even though she won't start her work until weeks later. At this meeting she gives the builder written instructions on how to pour the slab to facilitate staining and how to protect it during construction prior to staining. She also walks the job periodically and notifies the builder of potential problems she sees, for instance if the painter is making a mess on the slab. Says Hamm, " Customers have told me they can see we care about their project before, during, and after the project."

### **Action Steps**

The Concrete Sherpa strongly suggests you invest 80 percent of your marketing time and money on improving the 'service part' of your business and 20 percent on pure marketing items like brochures, direct mail, and web sites.

Follow these percentages until you can look at your company (or even better, have someone else look at your company) and honestly say your service is excellent. At that point, move the percentages to 50 percent on improving the 'service part' and 50 percent on the pure marketing. Excellent service companies should still spend 20 percent on improving the service and 80 percent on marketing.

Following a plan like this has an added benefit: You won't sell out ahead of your ability to effectively service the work. A company that only markets - and doesn't have the ability to service the work - is on a direct path to going out of business.





**Service has to  
be a way of  
life!**

**BEFORE**

The following are checklists for measuring the 'service part' of your business. Rate yourself on a one to five scale in each category and then start making plans for improving your service.

### **Service Before the Job Starts**

Your proposal is turned in on the date you said it would be.

Your proposal is clearly spelled out. All the items you know the prospect is going to want, but are not on the specifications, are listed as alternates so they don't have to call you repeatedly to find out how much various items are (this shows the prospect you have anticipated their needs).

What you are not going to do is as clearly spelled in your proposal as what you are going to do.

Expectations are clearly set for the client regarding product quality and schedules.

Your references and insurance certificates are turned in.

You have anticipated, from your experience, everything the prospect will need from you and turned it in. The prospect can only say to themselves, "XYZ Concrete has everything in order, they are so easy to work with."

You return phone calls the same day.



## **DURING**

### **Service During the Job**

You stay in touch with the superintendent as the job start date approaches so minor changes in his schedule won't be a crisis for you (calling the day before the job starts does not qualify as staying in touch).

Mix designs are submitted and approved far in advance of the concrete pour.

Your field personnel show up to the job with complete project information received from your office and are ready to work.

You do the job per the plans, specifications, and contract.

Unless there are problems on the job beyond your control, you perform to the schedule you agreed to. You do this because you said you would, even if it means working late or working Saturday.

Any snafus you run into that affect the schedule are communicated immediately to the job superintendent so he can adjust the schedules of other affected trades immediately.

Even if there are job problems beyond your control, you still try to help the superintendent make his schedule (within reason). It's better to have 50 superintendents who love your firm and tell your office rather than to have 50,000 four-color brochures any day of the week.

The work site is left clean each day.

You return phone calls the same day.



## **Service After the Job Has Ended**

If you are the owner, you go look at some of your finished projects periodically. You may have a little surprise waiting for you to discover.

You visit your completed job prior to service being needed to anticipate and schedule for problems that may arise.

You take care of minor fixes that are not your fault in the normal course of your service work without arguing for a change order every time (within reason). Sometimes the meetings, debate, and paperwork just aren't worth it for a \$200 item.

You collaborate with your estimating and construction departments about continual problems that are occurring. Can better planning eliminate or reduce some of these problems?

At the end of each job, you ask your client, "What can we do better next time?" Put what your customers say into action.

You return phone calls the same day.

**AFTER**





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You ***return*** phone ***calls*** the ***same day***.





## *Sherpa info*

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## Sherpa info

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### SUMMIT DATE

This document reached the summit (was created) on December 28, 2004 and is based on the best information available to the Sherpa at that time. To check for updates please click here <http://www.ConcreteSherpa.com/firstrule>.

### NAVIGATION & USER TIPS

You can move around this guide by using your mouse or keyboard arrows. Left mouse button goes to the next page, right mouse button goes to previous page. Click on the right arrow ( → ) for the next page and the left arrow ( ← ) to go the previous page.

### KEYBOARD SHORT CUTS

	PC	MAC
Zoom in (Larger)	[Ctrl] [+]	[⌘] [+]
Zoom out	[Ctrl] [-]	[⌘] [-]
Full screen/normal screen view	[Ctrl] [L]	[⌘] [L]

### ABOUT THE CONCRETE SHERPA

The Concrete Sherpa is a team of people that represent the experience, teaching and learning of our team members and other industry leaders *on a mission to make life better for the concrete contractor*. We are an idea center striving to deliver thought provoking ideas based on “Concrete Advice for Business and Life” to stimulate you to reach new heights. As a user, you should remember to consider all information you receive, here at the Concrete Sherpa or elsewhere, not as a *cast in concrete* recommendation, but rather as an idea for you to consider and ponder.



## *Sherpa info*

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### THE JOURNEY LEADING TO THE CONCRETE SHERPA PROJECT

The Concrete Sherpa Project (A [Sherpa](#) is a “guide”) was born at The Concrete Network in mid 2004. Here is how it happened:

The biggest surprise, or gift, since starting The Concrete Network in 1999 has been the concrete contractor friends from around the country we’ve made and witnessing the passion they have for what they do. These people include Dave Pettigrew, up in the San Francisco Bay Area, or the Verlennich brothers in Minnesota, or Bob Harris in Georgia, the list goes on and on. It’s quite inspiring.

We were once asked, “How are you so excited every day about concrete?” Well the answer is simple, it is impossible to not be excited about concrete when you have the job we do—interacting with hundreds of concrete contractors from every state in the country.

The thing we’ve learned about concrete contractors is that most are passionate *craftsmen*—they are often less passionate and experienced in the “office stuff”. Human nature channels us to do what we are most comfortable with; learning how to use a new saw-cutting tool is comfortable; learning and implementing a new estimating strategy, or job management tool, is not so comfortable.

## *Sherpa info*

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### THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

So Sherpa was born to provide FREE and easy to use information on topics many Contractors are not too comfortable with.

- Concrete Sherpa is here to provide help to contractors who are often ‘Lone Rangers’ and don’t have anyone to get solid business advice from.
- Concrete Sherpa is here to provide help for contractors who have to work too hard and too many hours in their business, and one day realize they need to work *on their business, not in their business*.
- Have fun with Concrete Sherpa and go faster towards reaching success than you might have on your own.
- To skeptics who think something free can’t be valuable, or there must be a trick- visit Concrete Sherpa and decide for yourself.

We hope you make great use of the Concrete Sherpa and it helps you to become an awesome success for yourself, your family, your church, and your community.

### VISIT THE CONCRETE SHERPA

To visit the Concrete Sherpa click here <http://www.ConcreteSherpa.com>.