



Closing Success System™

Handout Package

Proven Strategies to Survive and Prosper in an Uncertain Economy

Presented by Mike Jeffries
Managing Partner of Rivers of Revenue LLC

2009 Great Lakes Trade Exposition
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DeVos Place - Grand Rapids, MI.

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Mike Jeffries Bio – Rivers of Revenue LLC

Mike Jeffries is the Managing Partner of Rivers of Revenue LLC. We create strategic and tactical marketing programs that clearly separate our clients from their competitors. We utilize the Rivers of Revenue Closing Success System© to create immediate and dramatic increases in our client’s ability to close profitable business and retain clients. Mike has consulted with hundreds of contractors and service companies and his programs are responsible for millions of dollars in increased sales for his clients.

Mike has presented his program before numerous professional contracting associations and serves on the Marketing Committee for the Professional Landscape Alliance of New Jersey.

Contracting businesses consulted with include: Landscape Contractors, Painting Contractors, Roofing Contractors, Electricians, Flooring Contractors, Fencing Companies, Home Remodeling Companies, Mold Remediation Contractors, Powerwashing Contractors, Cleaning, Trucking and Home Theater Companies and many more service companies.

Mike Jeffries is an entrepreneur and business owner. He successfully planned and executed career changes from financial executive to sales leader to business owner. As a CPA he founded, merged, grew and sold a successful business consulting and accounting practice that he operated for 12 years. Mike is the founder of Rivers of Revenue, LLC which provides strategic and tactical marketing consulting to residential contractors with revenue up to \$100 million. Mike lives in New Providence, New Jersey with his wife Denise and their two daughters Anna and Abby. Mike’s two older children have graduated from college.

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You *Must* Know Your Numbers

<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	X	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	=	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
# Leads		Current Closing %		Customers

<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	X	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	=	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Customers		Average Sale		Revenue

What would a 10% Improvement in Each Area Mean for Your Company This Year?

<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	X	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	=	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
# of Leads		+ 10% Leads		# New Prospects

<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	X	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	=	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
# New Prospects		+ 10% Closing		# New Customers

<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	X	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	=	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
# New Customers		+10% Price Increase in Average Sale		Increased Revenue

See a completed example below of the impact of small increases in each area – lead generation, closing and price can have on your business.

In the second example – see how a small increase in closing success can offset at 40% drop in lead generation.

Why Focus On Closing More Of Your Leads?

It's **FAST...EASY...EFFECTIVE**

	Leads per Month	Closing Rate	New Customers	Average Sale	Annual Sales
Typical Contractor	30	20%	6	\$8,000	\$576,000
10% Increase in Closing Success Rate	30	30%	9	\$8,000	\$864,000
Total \$\$ Increase	--	+10%	+3	--	+\$288,000

Simply by being able to close **ONE** more lead out of every 10...you increase your sales by:

50%

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Why Focus On Closing More Of Your Leads?

Even if Your Lead Flow is Off 40%

	Leads per Month	Closing Rate	New Customers	Average Sale	Annual Sales
Typical Company	30	20%	6	\$8,000	\$576,000
40% Decrease in Leads	18	33%	6	\$8,000	\$576,000
No Sales Loss	-12	--	--	--	Survival

Simply closing just over **ONE** more lead out of every 10...you **SURVIVE** a 40% Decrease in Leads

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Use the evaluation below to find out if your marketing material is making you stand out from your competitors.

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Platitude Evaluations

You Be the Judge

1. **I Expect You to Say That** - Does your prospect expect you to say - Great Service, Highest Quality Materials, Friendly Staff etc. – Of Course They Do!
2. **Can Your Biggest Competitor Say the Same Thing?** Could your **Worst Competitor Say** the same things? Not do, just say.
3. **Competitor Comparison Test:** Cross your name off your ad and write in the name of your **Biggest Competitor**. Now you know what your prospect is thinking – Yeah your ads look and sound the same.

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Prospect Discovery Questions

1. What **things are important to your typical prospect** when buying your service?
2. What are the **biggest problems, frustrations, situations, scenarios**, etc. that typical prospects have working with a contractor?
3. What does a typical prospect **need to know** that he/she may not be aware of in looking for a contractor?
4. Prepare a detailed description of **what you do** to give the prospect what he wants.

Find out what the prospect wants and give it to them!

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Endorsement Letter Template

FROM THE DESK OF: JOHN SMITH, TITLE, COMPANY

I've Never Written A Letter Like This Before...

Dear <<Name>>:

As a _____, I hate paying for landscaping.

Luckily, I have discovered a secret weapon to control these costs **and still have beautiful landscaping**... his name is Pete Anselmo and he's the owner of _____ in _____.

Now, you and I both know that landscapers are a dime a dozen. At our properties, we get at least 3 calls a week from people who will give us "great service" for a low, low price.

We've all heard the "pitch".

But Pete is different. I've been dealing with landscapers for _____ years. Frankly, *none* of them have ever given us the kind of service that Pete gives us. He does an awful lot more for his clients than any other landscaper I've ever used.

He's truly setting a whole new standard for his industry. For example;

- All of his crews are *required* to provide one additional service each week that is not part of our agreement... and I get to pick the one I want. Last week they cleaned up all the cigarette butts that were suddenly visible now that the snow has melted.
- After a bad storm, Pete sent a crew over to do an emergency clean up – we didn't call – he just did it.
- His crew's are always uniformed and polite. They don't smoke or use foul language. In fact the only reason I know they have been there is that my building looks great.
- When he plants annuals – he gives us a design grid to show just how many flowers were planted and where *so I know I am getting what I paid for*.
- Pete's crews are *required* to get 40 hours of training in plant and lawn care every year. To my knowledge there isn't any standard in the industry for training so he set his own.
- Pete also provides "English as a second language" training for all his employees.
- I could go on and on...

At first I thought this would be expensive. Pete's been able to keep our maintenance costs in line for five years without cutting services. I'm not sure how he does it, but it's working.

Whether you've been thinking about changing your landscape service or not, I urge you to call Pete at **908-345-4001**. Start getting what you deserve from your landscaper.

Sincerely,

John Smith
Title - Company

PS. When you call and set a time to meet, be sure to mention that you got this letter to Pete. He has a great gift for you which I think you'll really enjoy.

Referral Strategy

Referral Strategy

- Pick out a premium for your clients that has a high perceived value compared to your cost (Restaurant.com is a good example)
- Create an offer letter and send it to a test group of your customers and referral sources and include the premium (50 to 100)
- Provide an easy form for them to list referrals on
- Offer to send the same premium to any of the prospects they refer (makes them look good)
- Send the premium to all the referrals
- Expect a 5%+ response rate.
- **Take a vacation with the profits.**

The referral letter is in your handouts.

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The referral letter template is below.

Referral Letter Template

June 12, 2008

Customer Name
Customer Address
City, State, Zip



Dear :

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for your faith in us at Green Pride Landscaping as your landscape installation company. Over the past 33 years we have grown to be one of the most respected businesses of its kind in Central New Jersey and it's all attributed to you, our loyal customers.

As you probably noticed, I have sent you a \$25 gift certificate from Restaurant.com. It entitles you to enjoy a meal from one of their 9,000 participating restaurants nationwide. I have sent this to you for 2 reasons; the first reason is to thank you for being a loyal customer of Green Pride Landscaping. Our 2006 and 2007 clients are receiving this gift.

The second reason I am sending this to you is to thank you ahead of time for helping us get the word out about Green Pride Landscaping so we can continue to grow our business. I am hoping your experience with us has been good enough that you would feel comfortable recommending us to some of your friends and associates. We are certainly proud of the awards we have won but it is recommendations from our clients that are the lifeblood of our business. If you came to us by referral then you know what I mean.

I am sure some of your friends and associates who are considering a new pond, patio or garden would enjoy taking advantage of our tremendous service model. So if you don't mind, do me a favor and fill out the enclosed referral form; there is space for up to 5 of your friends and associates. When I receive your form, I will immediately send them a \$25 Restaurant.com gift certificate and our Free Consumer Report called "The 2008 Guide to Hiring a Landscape Contractor". This gift will be sent out in your name so they will know that you are responsible for their good fortune.

Sincerely,

John Martin
President, Green Pride Landscaping, Inc.
NJ Home Improvement Contractor License – 13VH0999900

P.S. You don't have to participate in the referral program to redeem the gift certificate; it's yours to use at any time as a sincere token of my appreciation for your business.



Landscape
Lead Generation Tactic #9
Radius Marketing - Letters

Cost vs. Risk: **Low to Moderate**

Competitive Messages: **Few or None**

Advantages Versus Radius Postcards:

- Can be quickly changed/updated without costly graphic expense
- Inexpensive to print in house or at local office supply store

Disadvantages Versus Radius Postcards:

- May not get opened – postcard image hard to miss

Tactical Strategy:

- *Identical to Radius Post Cards:* If you have a customer in a particular neighborhood chances are very good that there are similar customers close by that have the same need and who fit the demographic/economic profile of your existing customer. You want to get your message to those people.
- Letter format can be personalized

Message Strategy:

- **Headline:** Put the street in the headline. This will interrupt the reader with something they're familiar with and peak the curiosity factor.
- **Copy:** Details of the job. This stirs the curiosity factor and may strike a chord with neighbors who are thinking of a similar improvement or have a similar problem with their home.
- **Offers:** Stop by to see the job. Limited time discount/bonus.
- **Tagline:** Curiosity to Open the letter up

Common Mistakes with this Tactic:

- Not hand addressing the envelopes
- Using postage meter instead of stamps
- Don't invite to see the job
- NO offer or offer is too generic
- One time mailing
- No tracking to see if this tactic is working

Optimal Use of Tactic:

- Mail to the neighborhood 3 times: Before, during and after the job.
- Special offer or seasonal offer to select group

Date

Customer
Street
City, State & Zip

Dear :

***According to April Issue of This Old House:
New Landscaping Can Increase the Value of Your Home by 10 to 15%***

If you are like most homeowners in Northern New Jersey, you probably have decided it is smarter to invest in your current home instead of taking a risk in the current real estate market.

If you've been thinking about giving your landscape a makeover but don't know where to start – our FREE Landscape Idea Guide will open your mind to the possibilities at all levels of investment.

My name is Peter Greentree: I am President of Green Pride Design Group. We recognize that homeowners need to be wary and a little cautious – at least in the beginning stages - when looking for a reputable, qualified and experienced landscape contractor. I would like to show you how you can be sure your project will be done right the first time, without all the hidden charges, hassles and poor quality that are all too common in our industry.

Please consider what truly separates us from other companies in our industry:

- **Our 11-step Design Process Insures a Design that Will be Pleasing – Regardless of Your Budget.**
We involve you right from the first phone call. - We spend time finding out about your project ideas and provide you with an easy to complete questionnaire so we know any lifestyle issues that might impact the project. Our designers have a minimum of 10 years of experience with projects like yours.
- **Written Installation Processes that Are Setting New Industry Standards**
Our written processes for hardscaping and planting were developed based on strict adherence to manufacturer's specifications. Contractors who can't provide you with written processes may skip or shortcut steps to lower your bid even though this voids the manufacturer's warranty and very likely jeopardizes the longevity of your project.
- **Our Reputation and Stability**
Our Consumer Guide has set a standard that very few, if any, of our competitors can match. It gives you the information you need to make the best decision possible in hiring a landscape contractor for your home.

If you are considering new landscaping for your home, I would appreciate the opportunity to demonstrate in person what separates us from our competitors. I can be reached at our office, (908) 555-1234 or on my mobile phone (973) 555-4321.

Sincerely,

Peter Greentree - President – Green Pride Design Group

P.S. Don't forget to ask me about a FREE landscape design service when you mention this letter – a \$250 dollar value.



Landscape

Lead Generation Tactic #13

Joint Ventures

Cost vs. Risk: **Extremely Low**

Competitive Messages: **None**

Advantages:

- Gives you access to prospects with little or no cost
- Prospects are pre-disposed to accept your message
- You're only paying a commission when a sale is made

Disadvantages:

- Time to find the right JV partner
- Time to develop the trust to do business with someone
- Expecting everyone to make the same amount of money or get the same benefit

Tactical Strategy:

- Establish "lead sharing" with other- non competing- companies that target the same prospect as you
- Have them offer your service to their existing customer base
- You offer their service to your existing customer base
- Commission is paid to JV partner when sale is made
- Can also share mailing lists...
- Exchange prospects that didn't convert

Message Strategy

- Company A is "referring" Company B

Common Mistakes with this Tactic:

- Companies don't do it
- Trying to go for the homerun when you haven't established a relationship yet

Optimal Use of Tactic:

- Offer and endorse other company to your existing customer base
- Provide prospects with additional services – that you don't offer - at a discount
- When bidding a job, note any need homeowner may have that you can pass on or endorse to JV partner.

60 Second Elevator Pitch for Landscape Contractors

- **We design and install** landscaping, patios, pools, fences and decks for homeowners
- **Who have** drab, overgrown shrubs and bushes, dilapidated patios and decks and **who are concerned about** the looks of their yard and the resale value of their home (*include as many as appropriate*)
- **And are looking for** enhancements that will look good, last a long time, have no hidden charges or fees, and are built by certified, uniformed landscape specialists.
- **Most people who hire landscape contractors aren't even aware that** the installation process is critical to the projects longevity, and that almost all landscape contractors take shortcuts on the quality in order to offer a lower price and get jobs from customers who don't know any better. **For instance, it's critical that** the excavation be one foot wider on each side of the concrete pavers area; this gives more stability to the pavers edge for driveways. **It's also important to** use concrete sand as your pavers setting material. We do not use quarry dust because of the high fine content. Quarry dust will trap excess moisture causing the pavers to heave and separate over time. (*insert here can be about any materials*)
- **We always offer** only high quality materials like I just mentioned; we also provide written quality control and maintenance checklists for all products we build or install – a service most other contractors don't provide. We also carefully screen our workers and certify them before they ever pick up a tool.
- **To help homeowners make the best decision possible we offer** a FREE Landscape Standards Checklist
- **That contains** all the questions they'll need to ask any landscape contractor to make sure that they're getting the best project possible for the money. **We also have over** 100 current references and a 13-minute quality assurance video showing comparison pictures of projects done the right way and the wrong way 3, 6, 12, 24, and 36 months after the job.

If would like a copy of our standards checklist – take out your business card now and write Free report on the back and hand it to me after the meeting. I'm John Smith from ABC Landscapes – making your neighbors jealous each time they drive by your house.

Notes: You can easily take this “master elevator pitch” and tailor it to 15, 30 or 45 second pitches or expand it to be a 5 minute talk. We call this the accordion approach – expand or contract to fit the need.

60 Second Elevator Pitch Implementation

- **Implementation**

- Develop the Elevator Pitch and then write it on paper
- Also record it and burn it onto CD's
- Distribute the written and audio version to all employees (yes, all employees)
- Make memorization of it a condition of their employment
- Conduct frequent “spot check” pop quizzes
- Reward those who excel at giving it
- Great for the receptionist (*point of contact*)

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Sources of New Business

- **Endorsements**
- **Referrals**
- **Additional Services/Products**
- **Past Customers**
- **Other Similar Target Groups/Markets**
- **Joint Ventures**
- **Co-Marketing**
- **Successful Tactics You Used to Grow**

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Elements of a Great Business Card

Front

- Logo and/or Company Name
- List of Key Services – Easy to Scan
- Contact Information – Main phone, Mobile Number AND Email (Website)
- Your Guaranty (or some other compelling point about your business that hits a “hot button” for the homeowner)

Back

- Create a mini-consumer report – “5 Questions to ask any landscape contractor before you hire them or 5 questions to evaluate a landscape contractor’s service and reputation”.
- Focus on YOUR strengths – length of time in business, design experience, certifications, safety training etc. (Stuff other landscape contractors can’t easily copy)
- Key – when you hand it out – hand it out with the back side up and say – “I am a landscape contractor and here are some key questions you should ask to evaluate any landscape contractor’s service and reputation.”
- Then turn it over to the front and say “I’m Mike Jeffries and we back every project with a 5-year guarantee” or whatever your guarantee is. You can also put something else compelling on the front as long as it is unique and hits a “hot button” for the homeowner.



Increase your Lead Flow INSTANTLY!

Not Answering Your Phone Live is Costing You Business

Just answering your phone gives you an instant advantage over 72 to 78% of your competitors that rely on voice mail or are out of business.

Landscaping Survey Calls

Morris County Yellow Book 2001-2002

Survey Calls Made on July 2, 2007 11:30 to 1:15

Type of Ad	Total Calls	Answered Live	Voice Mail	Out of Business
Display	25	7	11	7
% of Totals	100%	28%	44%	28%
Line or In Column	25	4	12	9
% of Totals	100%	30%	35%	35%
Total All Calls	50	11	23	16
% of Totals	100%	22%	46%	32%

Landscaping Survey Calls

Union County Yellow Book 2006-2007

Survey Call Made December 17, 2007 10:30 to 3:15

Type of Ad	Total Calls	Answered Live	Voice Mail	Out of Business
Display	41	22	15	4
% of Totals	100%	54%	36%	10%
Line or In Column	162	35	87	40
% of Totals	100%	22%	53%	25%
Total All Calls	203	57	102	44
% of Totals	100%	28%	50%	22%

Special Notes – 5 calls were answered “Hello” including 2 display ads – people calling these companies must wonder if they are calling a real company. One company answered “ABC landscaping and Smith Investments” – can’t imagine my using either of those! Last – One had a full mailbox, 3 others were not understandable and one guy was really nasty.

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Summary

- Most Landscape Contractors are Already **Spending \$ to Generate Leads**
- There is a **Fundamental Weakness** in the Marketing and Sales Approach of Most Landscape Contractors
- All the Marketing and Advertising **Looks and Sounds the Same** to the Prospect so they **Decide on Price**

Summary

**Always Focus on Closing the Prospects
that are Already Calling You**

- In Good Times – Easiest Way to Grow
- In Tough Times – Easiest Way to Survive

Differentiating Dirt So You Think Your Prospects Only Care About Price?

Dirt:

There's no bigger commodity on the planet, yet this classic example illustrates how one savvy "DIRT" guy took price out of the equation...

If you know construction, you know that dirt is needed for back fill, bedding and site work. There's dirt everywhere...HEY, It's DIRT! So for a project manager, you would think that all you really need to do is find the guy with the cheapest dirt.

But one dirt guy knew better.

In construction, you can't move to the next step of the project until the previous step is completed. And if one step is delayed, the ripple effect can affect the whole project's timetable...and time is money.

So this savvy dirt guy pointed out to his prospects that it wasn't about the "dirt".

- He told them about his fleet of trucks and how the entire order could be delivered at the same time.
- He told his prospects about his trucks – how they're maintained daily by his 30 year veteran mechanic and they don't break down.
- He told them about his driver's safety records – how they haven't had an accident in years.
- He told them about his 3 suppliers of "dirt" so that he always had the right dirt available at any time, day or night.

He knew that what was really important to his prospects wasn't the dirt... It was about making sure that the dirt actually got to where it needed to be....*WHEN* it needed to be there.

And because he knew what was really important to his prospects and then **PROVED** to them that he was the only "Dirt" guy who could: get it there when it was needed, that they wouldn't have to worry about it, he won most of the work in his area...*and did so while charging a premium price.*

So they next time you find yourself thinking that all your prospects want is the best price, remember the Dirt Guy!

Customer Satisfaction Survey

We appreciate your taking a moment to give us feedback on the job we just completed for you. Please return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope we provided. This helps us to monitor the quality of our work and helps us improve our service. If you were not satisfied with any of our work – please tell us so we can correct it. If you were happy please tell your friends.

Question #1: How likely are you to refer us to a friend or colleague?

(Circle the appropriate number below.)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(0 = highly unlikely, 10 = very likely)

Question #2: Your comments (positive or negative). If you didn't give us a "10", what do we need to do better?

Do you have any friends or associates you would like us to call for a landscape project ?

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **E-Mail:** _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail: _____

Can we use your comments in our marketing materials? yes no

Can we use you as a reference on occasion? yes no

Your Name (Please Print): _____

Date: _____



Find Out Why Our Clients Aren't Losing Sleep Over the Recession

YES! I would like to schedule a Complimentary "Getting More Business NOW! Coaching Session". I understand that this free gift is a **\$200 value!** Sessions held weekly at Mike's office or via tele-conference – See Mike for available dates.

YES! I would like to receive your FREE report: **Close More...Charge More...Make More Money** PLUS send me your email newsletter containing insider marketing secrets that will dramatically improve my profits. (Please send them to my email address below)

_____		_____	
Business Name		Your Name	
_____		_____	_____
Mailing Address		City	State
_____		_____	_____
Daytime Phone		Mobile Phone	Fax Number
_____		_____	
E-Mail Address (required)		Website Address	

Your Title			

Quick Stats

_____	_____	_____	_____
Nature of Your Business	Yrs. In Business	# of Employees	Approx. Annual Revenue

What area(s) of your business do you want to improve?

_____ Lead Generation	_____ Getting More Referrals
_____ Closing %	_____ Stop Competing on Price
_____ Other (specify) _____	

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