



## STAND UP FOR GOOD SERVICE

### FIGHTING THE INVASION OF THE RIP-OFF REPAIR ARTISTS

By Roy Bardowell, CDDC

In the last 20 years, our industry has been invaded by companies that are wreaking havoc on the residential garage door repair business. They focus on larger cities and use heavy advertising to target those who need emergency service or repairs.

Once their technicians are in customers' garages, they're known to run up repair bills of several hundreds of dollars. These bills are not legitimate. They're packed with exorbitant parts prices and unnecessary repairs. The total bill often exceeds the cost of a new door.

Unfortunately, many of these technicians are more salesmen than repairmen. They are often not well trained in proper service and repair of our products, but they do know how to fast-talk customers into a hefty repair bill.

And we, as door industry professionals, don't have to stand for it.

#### The Pain of the National Chain

While many of these companies are small operations, a number of national chains have emerged with affiliate locations throughout the country. Many of these national service chains are manipulative, deceitful, and driven solely by the almighty buck. Since their technicians' pay is often based on commission only, they are highly motivated to gouge customers, thus increasing their own paychecks.

Some national chains are known to focus on areas with older people. Not typically do-it-yourselfers, seniors are viewed as ripe for gouging. These unscrupulous companies are known to "bait and switch" customers by offering coupons, deals, and senior discounts, only to drive up the repair bill when they get in the garage.

#### Targeting the Vulnerable

Seniors are also less likely to price-shop online until they receive a shocking service bill. The elderly are also less likely to post a negative review online or file a complaint with the Better Business Bureau. For all these reasons, older clients are perfect targets for predatory companies.

But the elderly are not the only victims of these companies. Since their advertising expenses tend to be astronomical, these national chains often push their technicians to overcharge everybody. And since few customers know about garage door operation and parts pricing, nearly everyone is vulnerable.

#### Close to Home

My son, Roy Bardowell III, had a sales and service job with one of these national service chains in Orange County, Calif. But he was terminated for being too honest and not gouging the homeowners enough. At first I found that sad, but then I realized that this is today's reality.

His termination had a silver lining — it led him to start his own service business. He founded Luxor Garage Door Service in 2014, and he is an honest and skilled garage door serviceman happily working in Orange County.

Roy III soon discovered that the best way to build a business is with good, honest service. He is currently not advertising, but he receives dozens of calls simply from word of mouth.

He enjoys garage door work because he knows what he is doing, and he likes helping people and being appreciated for his honest and good work. Those who have perfected their service skills, priced their services fairly, and exhibited integrity have fared well and will continue to do so.

#### Ruining Our Reputation

The result of this invasion of residential repair rip-off artists has been a groundswell of angry customers from coast to coast. Their anger has caught the attention of local and national media, and we've all seen how bad press has tarnished the entire garage door industry.

Garage door companies are no longer widely viewed as one of a community's friendly and trustworthy service businesses. Thanks to widespread bad press and hundreds of negative online reviews, an increasing number of potential customers are seeing our industry as a bunch of sleazy, money-hungry con artists.

#### Manufacturers Can Help

Like it or not, our industry is in a war with unscrupulous companies. As in a real war, one way to win is to cut off the supply lines to the enemy. As long as springs, rollers, parts, doors, and operators are readily available, these scammers will continue to flourish.

It is difficult for manufacturers to control access to all of their products and parts.

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But when it's possible to identify an unethical dealer, I urge manufacturers to consider the ramifications of doing business with them. By choosing their dealers wisely, manufacturers can play a positive role in protecting our customers and the reputation of our industry.

### Dealers Can Help

Responsible dealers can also help by stepping up their customer service game and differentiating themselves from the bad guys. I advise dealers to concentrate on excelling, and eventually, people will be able to recognize the professional and honest dealers.

If you want to stand up for good service, try these basic tips.

1. Read and follow the IDA Code of Conduct.
2. Treat every job as if you were doing it for your closest family member. Treat the big customer and the small customer with the same integrity and respect. You want customers to rave about your company and work.
3. Send your dedicated techs for training whenever possible. IDEA, the annual Expo, and manufacturers are great sources for professional seminars, and they're often free.

If dealers fail to pursue excellence in service, consumers will find a way to fight back. Many websites such as bbb.com, Yelp.com, and ripoffreport.com allow homeowners to rant and display their displeasure for everyone to read. Worse yet, you could make prime-time television in a hidden-camera sting, which is becoming more common.

As Tom Wadsworth once said, "The best defense against bad press is good behavior." I agree. Our entire industry wins when we all act professionally, treat customers with respect, and become experts at service and repair. ■

*In the door industry for 42 years, Roy Bardowell has been an expert trainer in door and gate operators, contributing articles to industry magazines and presenting many operator workshops at Expo and IDA regional events. He is a Certified Door Dealer Consultant (CDDC) and can be reached at 480-225-4396.*

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