

# TAKING CARE OF —•YOUR•— BUSINESS

## The importance of self-reflection at a company level

By Dan Ditzler  
President, Newton Associates

### Editor's note:

In the third installment of Dan Ditzler's column, he discusses the essentials of branding and differentiation. It is vital to know who you are, what you do well, what your weaknesses may be, and what areas you might consider expanding into.

### Who are you?

Any fans of classic rock out there?

We can take a few lessons from one of the most popular classic rock groups — The Who. A band that fascinated audiences with the power of pop culture and devoted an entire album entitled “The Who Sell Out” to the world of advertising.

However, it is their “Who Are You?” song that more aptly delves into the changing nature of brand identity. The catchy chorus is one we all wind up asking ourselves in pensive moments — “Who are you? Who, who, who, who?” I encourage dealers of door, gate, and access products to do a deep dive into this essential question.

### Know thyself (and be brutally honest)

Looking in the mirror can sometimes be difficult. At times it is good to see a familiar face, but when you really stop to study it, you may notice blemishes and wrinkles you didn't notice before. You may not even recognize the person you see.

Business owners should occasionally hit the pause button to examine how they appear to customers, employees, and the public. Does your company truly reflect your goals and values? Do you see yourself as others see you? Who are you?

### How many faces do you have? Are they all in sync?

Some installing dealers focus on only one sector of the market even though most dealers sell variations of the same products to the customers of multiple markets. Determine where you concentrate most of your time and business. Is it residential and commercial garage doors, door operators, gate operators,

or access controls? Is your focus on one exclusively product or product line?

If you address multiple markets with multiple products, it's important to understand the percentage that your business represents. You may need to focus on strengthening your image in certain areas to maintain your market position. Assess whether you are the leading provider in your territory or facing stiff competition.

Identifying your ideal customer and ensuring you are well known to similar prospects is key to growth. Your approach to business promotion also matters; being proactive in reaching out to potential clients can be more effective than waiting for customers to contact you when they have a need.

Additionally, consider whether most of your customers are direct consumers or if you primarily sell to builders of homes and facilities. By recognizing what areas your company excels in and targeting your marketing and sales in that direction, you can further cement your identity and help your business thrive.

### Are you a technology whiz, or are you strictly about nuts and bolts?

There was a time when garage door, gate, and access control products were not considered high tech. Well, times have changed. The digital age has come to every access point, and it's time to embrace it, not ignore it.

While the security industry has been at the forefront of smart home products, the controls and accessories that work with these platforms and apps have brought garage door products content along with them. Home Link



**BUSINESS OWNERS SHOULD  
OCCASIONALLY HIT THE PAUSE  
BUTTON TO EXAMINE HOW  
THEY APPEAR TO CUSTOMERS,  
EMPLOYEES, AND THE PUBLIC.**

was an early entry, but manufacturers like Chamberlain (among others) have embraced the latest smart home technologies in order to integrate garage door functionality directly into smartphone control apps.

If you are approaching the market as just a company that installs doors, operators, and radio controls then you owe it to yourself to become knowledgeable about all the possibilities that exist within home security, including convenience, safety, and comfort products. Understanding how to operate in this environment makes good business sense. Homeowners are increasingly embracing these tools; you should too.

The same principles apply to commercial sites, which are even trickier to manage given the demands of balancing public access and site safety and security. If you are only focused on the door market, then you might

*continued on page 60*

continued from page 58

miss out on growth opportunities in gate operation, access control solutions, and parking management. Continuing education opportunities from the Door and Access Systems Manufacturers Association is an excellent place to start.

### Are you taking advantage of outside resources?

Going it alone is never easy. However, it is important to keep channels of communication open with the companies whose products you stock and install. Take full advantage of the resources offered by the manufacturers you represent and continue to evaluate whether there are other local contractors you might want to partner with.

It's also important to make sure your employees are trained in all the nuances of the equipment you offer and to stay on top of new products in the pipeline. Are there programs you can tap for co-op advertisement dollars, volume discounts, or sales promotions? If you fully support the products



### IF AFTER A SELF-EXAMINATION YOU'RE READY FOR EVEN MORE FEEDBACK, THEN SURVEY YOUR CUSTOMERS.

of the manufacturers you represent, then they will be more likely to support you.

Another resource you should consider is complementary partnerships with other local contractors. If you install gate operators, then get to know the local gate and fence companies. If you deal with entry doors and/or garage doors, then consider working with door and window installers or locksmiths. Partnering with other small businesses can lead to larger project opportunities for you and your partner companies.

### Who do your customers think you are?

If after a self-examination you're ready for even more feedback, then survey your

customers. Most small businesses are good at asking customers for reviews and testimonials, but that can be transparently self-serving. Surprise your customers with a leave-behind survey designed to find out what they think and know about your company and the products and services you provide. Ask if they would be likely to recommend your company to family and friends. Maybe offer a gift card in return in order to increase the likelihood of getting valuable feedback.

The business environment is always challenging for small businesses. Knowing your essential strengths and weaknesses, areas for improvement or expansion, and identifying ways to make your business more valuable can help you move beyond "Who are you?" to "Who you can be." ■

*Newton Associates is a metro Philadelphia-based business-to-business advertising and PR agency with a long history in this industry that represents manufacturers of garage doors, door operators, gate operators, access control systems, radio controls, security and home technology systems, and related building products.*

**IDC Spring**  
**1974-2024**

**50<sup>TH</sup>**  
**ANNIVERSARY**

**GARAGE DOOR SPRINGS ARE OUR THING.**

IDCSRING.COM | 763.786.6527