

Outdoor Structure Insights

Top 5 Mistakes Dealers Make When Selling Outdoor Structures — and How to Avoid Them



Being upfront and confident about your outdoor structures is the most important quality you can have as a dealer or as a sales team. PHOTOS COURTESY OF PEQUEA/LANCASTER COUNTY BACKYARD

Over my time in the industry, I've noticed an interesting shift in customer priorities. These days, customers are more willing to pay a higher price for quality service than to settle for a lower price with poor service. This move from focusing on price to valuing service means that the relationship between dealers and builders is even more crucial.

Too often, conversations between the two focus only on the most recent build, the one coming down the pipeline, and adjustments on current orders. But if we take the time to listen, share feedback, and offer insights from our respective experiences, we can strengthen our work and create a smoother experience for our

customers.

With a decade under my belt, with a builder like Pequea and its retail branch, Lancaster County Backyard, I've noticed a few common mistakes dealers make during sales. Here are five of the most important ones and how to avoid them.

MISTAKE #1 — Playing Small with Big Structures

My best advice for dealers selling high-end structures like pavilions is to be very straightforward. Being upfront and confident about your structures is the most important quality you can have as a dealer or as a sales team.

Even before you're talking to a potential customer, invest in your website; great

photos help you tell a high-end lifestyle story and can prime the customer for a bigger structure and higher price.

Once you start seeing high-end builds as opportunities, the next step is learning to talk about price with the same confidence.

MISTAKE #2— Apologizing for Price Instead of Owning Value

Position yourself as a company that is comfortable with its products and offerings. Understand that you're not selling a structure; you're selling a gathering space or a more organized life. Being able to talk about a structure beyond the price, to see the structure for what it could mean for your customer's quality of life, marks the sales pitch of a trustworthy dealer.

Don't start a conversation by saying that this model or that one is expensive. You should be confident enough to say: "Here is the price, this is what it is. We're not ripping you off. This is why the price is this way, and here's what is involved."

Your sales team needs to be convinced on the product themselves to be able to acknowledge that there may be cheaper options out there, like a box-store price, but also be able to show why this high-end, expensive option is the real choice. If customers are just comparing dollars, obviously, they're going to choose the cheaper one. But when they understand what your product truly offers, and your sales team can clearly articulate the value your structure provides compared to a big-box alternative, that's when real selling happens.

Customers who come to my team often do so because the cheaper structure they had lasted about three years, and then a windstorm came and blew it over. Now they know that they use it and have an idea for what they really want. Being able



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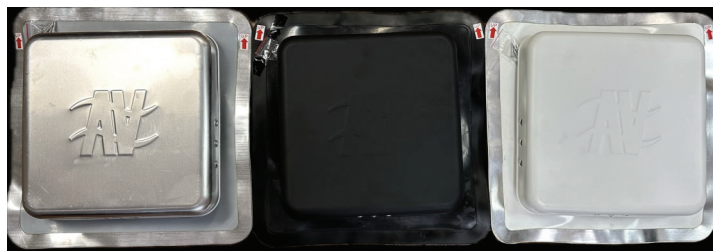
to tell that story preemptively can help you own the value of your structure, too.

MISTAKE #3— Letting Change Orders Become Chaos

This is a critical point. When you or your team is navigating between a customer and your builder, the importance of constant,

quality communication can not be overstated. With these moving pieces, there is the potential and possibility for issues.

When a change order does come up, the best practice is this: to acknowledge the request, respond to the request, be straight and upfront on how the pricing/price adjustment will work, immediately update any sales document, and get the customer



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to confirm the change via written confirmation. Going through those steps is very important to make sure you, your builder, and your customer are all satisfied with the final product.

In terms of preventing unnecessary change orders, that kind of knowledge and practice comes with trial and error, experience, and the wherewithal to develop your own system. As the seller, you'll know when it's best to clarify specifics up front with a customer and when it's best to wait until the customer is committed to the purchase. There's no single right approach, but the ability to read your customers and anticipate their needs is essential.

MISTAKE #4—Ignoring Long-Term Resale Value

A common mistake is overlooking how much a well-designed outdoor structure can add to a property's long-term value.

One thing to consider is that people do like well-thought-out, nicely designed outdoor living areas. While you may not be able to provide an exact resale value, you should be able to explain how there is potentially value there.

Potential buyers are going to notice nice outdoor living areas and pay for them. People know that when they make upgrades to their property, it does increase or at least has the potential to increase the resale value.

So, learn how to shift the conversation from spending money to investing or growing value. Purchasing a gazebo for your garden or a shed for your workshop is fun, sure, but it can also increase the value of your property down the line, which makes it even better. Learn how to say that to someone who might be hesitant about just spending money on what's fun.

MISTAKE #5—Overlooking the Importance of Small Details

Even with something as big as a Timber Frame Pavilion, the details define the structure, shape your customers' happiness, and strengthen your business.

Every ordering process requires an order form that includes those small but



A well-designed outdoor structure can add to a property's long-term value.

significant details, so you can't forget them. Having a detailed order form ensures nothing slips through the cracks and shows exactly what's missing when something does.

That's how my team works. We have a detailed order form, and if anything is missing, we double-check with the dealer to make sure we have all the information we need. If we notice any type of discrepancy, potential issue, or run into

any questions or concerns about a custom element, we immediately reach out to the dealer and try to make sure they reach out to the customer when needed.

Before a build gets started or finalized, we want to make sure we understand it completely. We bring any questions to the dealer, which helps confirm that nothing has been overlooked and that the customer's expectations match what's being built.



Making sure the customer's expectations match what's being built is a top priority.

BONUS TIP — Build a Partnership, Not Just a Purchase Order

Relationships are a two-way street. You're going to want to choose a builder you can trust. Someone who is invested in the research and development of new products and who keeps on top of drawings, pricing, and the details. Those are the relationships you want to have, maintain, and keep. A good builder keeps things accurate, interesting, and fun for their dealers.

Above all, communication fuels the strongest of relationships. To keep and maintain strong relationships between dealers and suppliers, communicate and communicate regularly. Talk about the job while it's being sold, when it's sold, and after.

I think, across the board, no matter the industry, my tip would be: be fun to work with. That makes work fun for everyone as

well as eases communication and strong relationship building.

Whether you're selling a single shed or a full outdoor living space, the key is the same: lead with confidence, clarity, and collaboration.

At Pequea, we exist to support our dealer network. Of course, a big part of this is providing new and exciting structures that are built to the best possible standards. But it also looks like the direct help we give our dealers. We give out lots of information to our dealers, such as good photos they can use, easy access to handbook-type information, free prints, and that kind of thing. Beyond that, the biggest help we provide is availability for quick support, whether it be phone calls

or emails. We want to provide anything we can think of that is important to dealers. I strongly suggest you work with dealers who prioritize their builders similarly.

Whether you're selling a single shed or a full outdoor living space, the key is the same: lead with confidence, clarity, and collaboration. A great dealer does more than close sales; they create experiences. And when builders and dealers approach each project as partners, the results can be truly incredible. **PB**

Kevin King is the Retail Manager at Pequea and Lancaster County Backyard, where he has led marketing project coordination and customer service for over a decade. Pequea is a premier manufacturer of Timber Frame Pavilions, catering high-end outdoor structures to the dealer and wholesale market.



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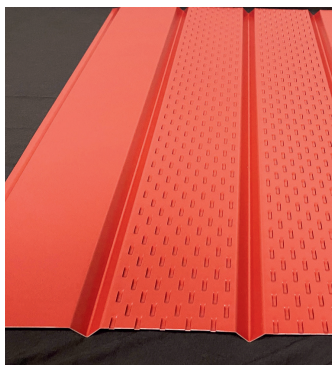
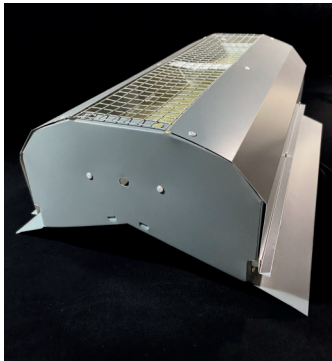
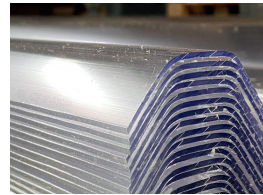
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