


# Expand and Retain Your Professional Customer Base

Your store may be highly focused on DIY customers, but perhaps you want to diversify your customer base and do not know where to begin.

In the January issue of *Hardware Retailing*, editors spoke with plumbers and retailers who serve the pros to better understand what professionals value in a supplier.

Featured below are just a few ideas for how you can build and retain your own professional client base, based on the points the pros and retailers serving them shared with us.

While the following information is focused on how to best work with plumbing professionals, it pertains to all pros and contractor relationships. 

## Three Ways to Increase Your Professional Clientele

### 1 BE PROACTIVE

Try to get out and visit jobs sites regularly, or stop if you pass one on the road. While a full-time outside sales person may not make sense for your operation, consider electing a representative to visit pros about twice a month.

“Anytime I see studs going up, I stop and try to see what’s going on and if we can help in any way,” says Andrew Myers, manager at Mayfield Plumbing & Electric in Mayfield, Kentucky.

### 2 INFORM PROFESSIONALS OF YOUR LOCATION

“Knowing the location would be a great way for us to be aware that the business is near us when we’re on a job,” says Bill Haws, general manager of Bill Howe Plumbing in San Diego, California. “We try to arm our guys with all the

information they need when they’re out. If we don’t know a store is there, they won’t either. If retailers provide us this information, we will be more likely to stop in and cut down on our time driving around.”

### 3 WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Welcome new contractor businesses to the neighborhood so you become top of mind as a potential supplier and business partner. To inform these professionals of your business’s location, hours and services, consider making a flier,

similar to the example on the following page. Having this flier handy will allow you to share your store’s information when you are out on a job site or use it for strategic mailings to new clients in the area.

## Questions to Ask Professionals After Initial Contact



**What could I do to make you decide to shop at my store more often?**



**What items would you like me to carry? What am I not stocking that you need?**



**What services do you value?**

# Do You Want to Retain Your Professional Customer Base?



## PROFESSIONAL SOURCE

Consider creating a bulletin board that professionals can place their business cards on so when DIYers are in need of a contractor, they can be referred to the board.



## COMMUNICATE

Keep the lines of communication open with professionals. You may have not spoken with or seen a certain contractor in a while, but do not be afraid to reach out.



## BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

"I'm not sitting still during the day," says Myers. "I try and call people if I have free time and make a pitch. I make sure I'm in touch with professionals and try and keep relationships rolling and growing."

## Welcome to the Neighborhood Flyer

### STORE PHOTO:

Include a clear, high-quality photo of your store so potential customers can recognize your business when they pass by.

### ABOUT US:

Add a brief blurb about your independent business. This is important since many professionals are independently owned as well.

### CONTACT INFO:

Share your store hours and contact information so pros have all of the information they need to contact you or your store. Also, consider attaching your personal business card.

**ABC HARDWARE**  
www.ABCHardware.com

**About Us**  
ABC Hardware is a family owned business that has been serving the community since 1955. The store's core mission is to serve area DIY and professional customers by providing top-notch service, convenience and competitive prices.

**Our Services**

- Delivery**  
When you are on a job site and need a last-minute part, you can call ABC Hardware to deliver the items you need.
- Rental**  
ABC Hardware has a wide variety of tools available for rental to help you with many different projects.
- Special Orders**  
ABC Hardware strives to provide you with all of the products you need. Our team is able to special order items not available in store.

**Contact Info:**  
123 ABC Hardware Ln., Hardware City  
Phone: 123-987-4567  
Email: ABC@hardware.com  
Hours: (M-F) 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.  
(Sat.-Sun.) 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

**We would love to have you as a customer!**

### LOGO AND WEBSITE:

Include your store's logo and website to create a well-branded flier. Adding your store's website will show professionals where to get additional information about your business.

### SERVICES:

Include the services and benefits that differentiate your business from area competitors.