

Vinyl Fence

Tip

Practical and Proven Ways to Sell More Vinyl Fences

From your friends at National Vinyl Products

How to keep customers happy with longer-than-expected lead times



Here's the good news: You've not only been able to keep your fencing business up and running throughout the pandemic, but new orders are up.

And now for the bad news: Disruptions in the supply chain combined with increased demand for new fences have caused your lead times to increase significantly. Fencing companies are among the businesses that are seeing a surge in sales due to the pandemic.

According to an article in The Washington Post by David Lynch ("In a bleak economy, these companies are flourishing"), businesses that cater to farmers, ranchers, and suburbanites are fueling the increase.

And, the trend may continue as more Americans leave urban areas because of work-from-home changes and the desire for more space.

"The rise of some companies, and the fall of others, comes as the economy struggles to recover from the record 9.5 percent quarterly decline in economic activity over the spring," according to reporter David J. Lynch.

Vinyl product manufacturers, who worked at reduced capacity during nationwide shutdowns, are facing backorders, and PVC shortages are also common. As a result, many fencing companies who typically offer about a two-week time from purchase to installation, now have to ask customers to wait 10 weeks or more.

How can you keep your fencing customers satisfied with those kinds of unexpected lead times?

Communicate clearly about the delays.

Be transparent about delays and the reasons for them. Simply, demand is greater than supply for our customers, and for vinyl nationwide.

When any of those raw materials face a disruption, it can cause a trickle-down effect on the entire supply chain. COVID-19 (coronavirus disease) is slowing the production and delivery of raw building materials.

Additionally, social distancing regulations have limited production, and some suppliers have shut down for an extended period of time or shut down altogether.

Since the Great Recession earlier this century, many fencing companies have shifted away from stocking large fencing inventories. While this policy has helped businesses build solid cash flow, it has contributed to the lack of supply we are experiencing now. This may require placing larger orders and keeping a well-stocked inventory on hand.

Make sure all your company content informs customers about current delivery timetables. Explain that you are doing all you can to make things so as smoothly as possible. Use your website, social media accounts, and email lists to keep customers in the loop.

Put a banner on your website.

Many companies are using a banner at the top of their websites that features COVID-rated information. Explain that your fencing company is experiencing higher-than-average order volume and that delivery delays are possible. You can add a link to another page that offers updated information. Here's an example of the wording for your website banner.

COVID 19 Update: We are doing our best to offer superior customer service and a healthy environment for our staff and customers. Unfortunately, many orders are currently delayed due to circumstances beyond our control. Most vinyl fencing orders can be installed within approximately 8-10 weeks from the



time of purchase. We appreciate your patience and understanding.

And here's another wording option.

Due to unprecedented demand during the pandemic, we are backordered on many vinyl styles and colors. You can expect your time from order to installation to be about eight weeks, depending on your choice of product. We apologize for the inconvenience. Please click [here](#) to visit our product pages for more specific information.

Under-promise and over-deliver.

Add a little buffer time when you offer a delivery time to your fencing customer. That way, if you can deliver and install their fence sooner than expected, your customers will be delighted rather than disappointed. Just a little wiggle room will go a long way here.

Everything is a bit uncertain these days, and if you over-estimate turns out to be an under-estimate, let your customer know as soon as possible about the delay. Tell them as much information as you can about then they can expect their new fence.

Reward your customers for their patience.

Here's an example. When Amazon.com had trouble meeting all its orders during the holiday season of 2016, it launched an interesting incentive called "FREE No-Rush Shipping." The ongoing program gives Prime members credits toward future purchases when they select an extended shipping option.

These uncertain times are stressful enough without having the added wrinkle of waiting a long time for something you'd like to have installed on your property today. You can help your customers feel better about the delays by rewarding them for making a fence purchase. Consider offering a bonus to customers placing orders during this time of deals. Here are a few ideas.

- Discount on an expanded color choice
- Free cleaning in one year
- Extended warranty
- Discount on next purchase
- Gift card to a local restaurant
- Discounts on in-stock fencing colors and styles

Ask customers to schedule delivery until supplies are up.

Another way to keep your customers happy is to offer them a discount if they order now for a winter or spring delivery. Explain that when cold weather hits, supplies will go up, and prices will go down.

You'll notice that each of these steps puts building a relationship with your customer as a top priority. Communication is a crucial way of building that trust. Let folks know that the delays are industry-wide and that your company is doing it can to get their new fence installed as quickly as possible.



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