



# Common Mistakes in Selling Roof Maintenance

*Midwest Roofer* magazine recently asked Greg Hayne, owner of Roof Management, Fairfield, IA, what he considers top mistakes that contractors make in selling roof maintenance. Hayne, who developed a training program for roofing services departments in which he shares

best practices and helps roofers grow their service departments in both size and profitability, provides four pervasive mistakes.

## 1 Contractors oversell service.

“When it comes to roof maintenance, contractors try to sell too much,” said Hayne, who is fond of comparing car maintenance to roof maintenance. “Let’s say that you have a roof that is 18 years old. That is like having a car with 180,000 miles on it. Obviously, there are going to be some dings on the car’s fenders, and some scratches in the paint here and there, but that doesn’t necessarily mean you are going to fix them. It is the same with a roof: From a waterproofing standpoint, often some repairs are more important than others.”

Prioritize what needs repairing, he said. “For a car, you need to maintain the engine and brakes, but you don’t necessarily care about the scratch on the back fender. The mistake that I see with roofing contractors is that they recommend to owners that they repair the brakes, change the oil, paint the car, redo the upholstery, and put new carpet in the backseat to match the carpet in the front seat. The result is that building owners feel they have to spend more money than they want, and they don’t know how to pick among good and bad options. So, they often decide to do nothing.”

Hayne added, “Contractors need to ask themselves: If I do not fix this deficiency, is the roof going to leak in the next 12 months? If the answer is no, don’t fix it. If you have a roof that has 12 pitch pans on it, two of which are probably leaking now and two that are likely to leak within the next 12 months, you should quote to repair four pitch pans, not all twelve. Then, if you want to give them an option to fix the other eight, great, but explain that the first four are ‘less of an option.’”

## 2 Contractors present lump-sum rather than itemized proposals.

“Contractors present proposals that list five items, numbered 1 through 5, and a lump sum. That’s not good,” Hayne said. “Use line items, each with a dollar amount, so that an owner can pick and choose among options and prioritize their importance. Then they can more easily choose. The owner may not care, for example, that his gutter splices are leaking because, presently, water is not getting inside the building. You often won’t know how owners will decide what to fix, so make it easy for them to pick and choose.”

## 3 Contractors fail to explain the consequences of not making a repair.

Contractors should explain why a given repair is necessary. “And this is the kicker: Contractors not only need to present their price for the recommended work, but they need to show the owner the potential financial consequences of not making the repairs. Consider

“Contractors not only need to present their price for the recommended work, but they need to show the owner the potential financial consequences of not making the repairs.”

those 12 pitch pans, four which need immediate fixing,” Hayne said. “Tell the customer, ‘If you wait for them to leak and call us, we have a minimum service charge. So, if you fix them individually as each leaks, you’ll be paying four service charges. However, the cost to fix all of them now is \$X.’ If you don’t show them how much money they can save, all they will see is how much you are asking them to spend on a roof that at that moment isn’t even leaking,” Hayne said.

“There are very few contractors who spell out in their proposals the consequences of not making the repair. Give owners a choice: Do you want to pay \$X now or wait and spend \$Y? I do not know a single roofing contractor in the country who does that in his repair proposals.”

## 4 Contractors do not show owners needed repairs through photographs and drawings.

Even with the availability of tablets and software programs, “my experience is that most contractors do a poor job of documenting the work that they are proposing to do. They are not showing the ‘scratches on the fenders’ or that the ‘car carpet needs replacing.’”

Hayne recommends documenting needed repairs with either photographs or an annotated roof drawing. “The roof drawing is often missing. It can either be a CAD drawing or a Google Earth satellite photo, but on the drawing, you need to show where the pictures were taken,” Hayne explained.

“Keep in mind that the person who is evaluating your proposal may not be able to see the roof and, in fact, may be 1,000 miles from that actual roof. You need to bring the roof to the owner,” Hayne said. “Photographs and the marked drawings help illustrate the present condition of the roof and will provide you credibility.”

*Greg Hayne is owner of Roof Management, Fairfield, IA. He can be reached at 641.469.6464 or at [www.creatinggreatservice.com](http://www.creatinggreatservice.com).*