

Case Study



On Fire with Follow-Ups:

How CinderBox Chimney Services used Closing Commander™ to increase sales revenue significantly.

CinderBox Chimney Services is On Fire with Follow-Ups

A case study on how a home service company used Closing Commander™ to increase sales revenue significantly.

Like many home service businesses, CinderBox Chimney Services is a family-owned, family-operated, and family-oriented full service business. Also, like most home service businesses at this stage of growth, there just never seems to be enough people available to do everything that needs doing.

Owners Jeff and Kathleen Wilensky already had a growing business when we first met them in the summer of 2017. It seemed like things were steady and working pretty well for them. But they were about to be hit with a bombshell when a key employee suddenly left the business.



An office manager is a central role in any home service business. They often wear many hats, and handle so many different things that the good ones are literally indispensable. Losing an office manager is painful at any time, but if they leave suddenly, without notice, it can be excruciating. Such was the case with the office manager at CinderBox.

As Jeff and Kathleen started diving into the daily management tasks vacated by the departing employee, they quickly realized where she had been failing, and why she might have left. One undone task was particularly troubling to Jeff: the task of following up on estimates that had been provided to customers, to see if they had any interest in proceeding with the work. In fact, he now realized they had a stack of open estimates that had just kept growing, kept aging, and had kept a considerable amount of money from coming into the company. It was a sickening feeling when Jeff realized she had not been doing anything with these estimates.

"Our office manager was so far behind that there was a 3 foot tall pile of estimates waiting for follow-ups. After our office manager left, I went through these and found that some of them were 2 years old!"

Jeff knew there was still a LOT of money inside those estimates. He also knew the solution to unlocking that revenue was going to involve more than just hiring a new office manager. Jeff understood he needed a system. It was around that time that he heard through his industry about a company looking for beta-testers to try a new app called Closing Commander™. He jumped at the chance, and enrolled in the beta the same day.

The Goal

To follow up on 100% of the still-open estimates provided to customers after an initial service call. Jeff told us he would consider Closing Commander™ a win for them if 10% of their open estimates would close through the app.

The Outcome

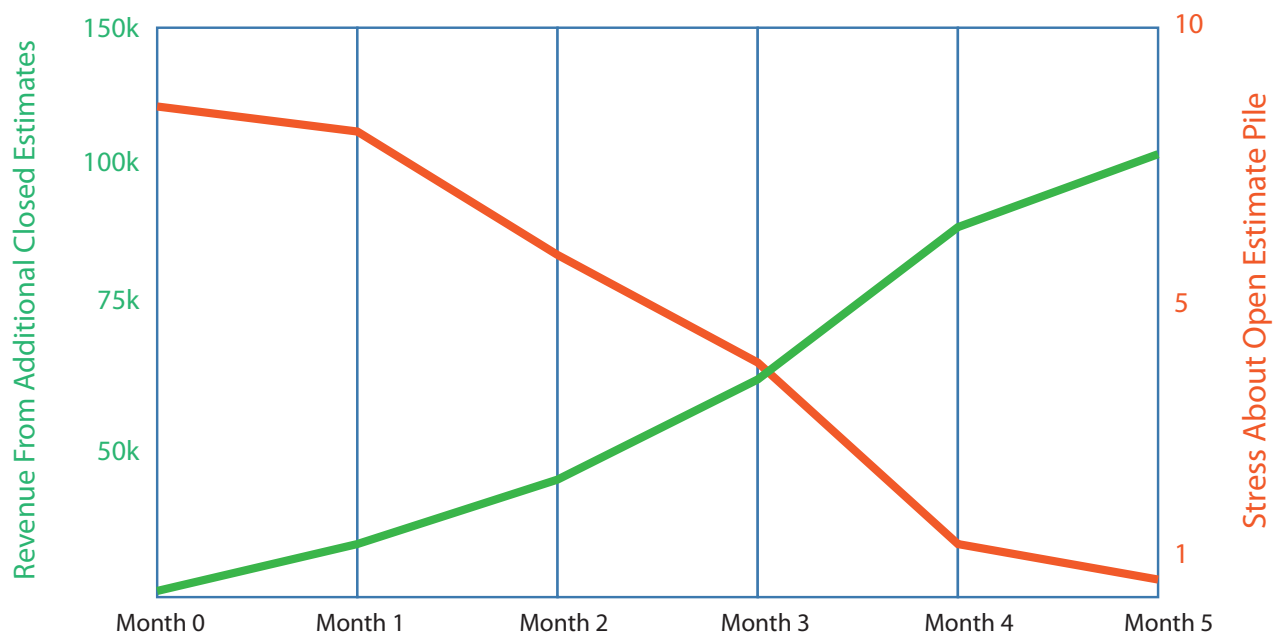
- Stress free, no worry follow up with customers
- Every customer with an estimate is followed up with
- Increased communication with customers has improved relationships overall
- Closed 20% of open estimates entered into the Closing Commander™ system
- That 20% equated to an additional \$105,000 in off-season revenue
- Jobs won through the app were worth an average of \$3276 each, which is a higher ticket than the company-wide average job amount.
- They have eliminated their pile of open estimates by implementing an efficient system that ensures a uniform process is followed and time is not wasted.
- They have been able to find out why some jobs were lost, gaining priceless insights for the future improvement of their sales processes.
- Employees feel supported and no longer feel that creating estimates is a waste of their time.

How They Did It

After signing up and logging in, Jeff decided to test the app out first by adding only a few customers. He was surprised at how easy it went, and in just a few minutes, he had added three customers and started automatic follow-ups for them. The very next day, he had heard back from all three, and one of them, an older estimate he didn't have any hope of winning, said they were ready to move forward on the proposal. This inspired Jeff to add everyone from that pile, and let Closing Commander™ handle emailing them all.

Within the first month they were closing deals with ease and getting much better communication back from customers. Also, they had started finding out why they were not winning certain jobs, which was a benefit of improved communication they had not expected. Toward the end of that first month, Jeff no longer worried about having a stack of estimates that needed to be gone through and followed up on. It was being handled, and it was the kind of system he knew he could depend on.

But the biggest change was the way that Closing Commander™ was reducing the stress of not having enough work during the traditional industry “slow season” of April - August (chimney sweeping, as you might imagine, is primarily a cold-weather service). But the slow season never happened this year! Month after month, Jeff was now filling his calendar with the bigger masonry jobs, and most of them coming from that pile of estimates he entered into Closing Commander™. The stress of not having enough work was melting away as the jobs continued rolling in.



Results Over Time

The Hurdles

The biggest hurdle Cinderbox faced was making sure every customer with an open estimate was entered into the Closing Commander™ app, because time is limited in a small contractor business. The second and happily unexpected hurdle was keeping up with the work Closing Commander™ brought in.

#1 Entering Every Customer with an Open Estimate

Once Jeff and Kathleen saw how easy it was to put a customer's information into the Closing Commander™ app, they simply made it a part of their SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures). They discovered they could enter the information through the Closing Commander™ app on IOS and Android devices while out on the job or on a computer in the office at the end of the day. In other words, the system is versatile and allows you to enter the info when convenient for you. Jeff and Kathleen would even tackle entering part of the stack in the evenings while they watched a sporting event on television.

To start a follow-up, all that is required to enter is the customer's first name, last name, email address, mobile phone number, gender and a short description of the estimate. Kathleen found that each entry took around 40 seconds to complete, and Closing Commander™ took the rest of the follow-up tasks over from that point. Once entered, they could forget about it and let the system go to work.

#2 Managing the Additional Work

The first month of automated follow-up activity brought in so much additional work that Jeff realized very quickly he needed to make sure he could cover the unexpected workload. While this might stress some owners out, Jeff was ecstatic because this work came along during the traditional slow season for chimney service companies. He was able to keep his small business and employees busy, reducing his stress level (and theirs) to keep them all busily employed.

As Closing Commander™ continued to work for their business, Jeff and Kathleen also realized that they had been leaving a lot of money on the table over the years by not making follow-ups a bigger priority in their business. They had spent a lot of well-meaning marketing dollars, and trained great employees to go out and do the work, which also included providing estimates for additional work when needed, yet hadn't realized all the positive effects good consistent follow up could bring. They knew it was important, and they thought they had tasked the right employee with getting it done, but never had a dollar

amount they could attribute directly to following up consistently. Now they do. Jeff assures us he will never let that task go undone again, especially as easy as we've made it for him.

"Prior to Closing Commander, Our office manager was so far behind that there was a 3 foot tall pile of estimates waiting for follow up's. After our office manager left, I went through these and found that some of them were 2 years old! At this point I inquired about and ultimately subscribed to Closing Commander. Since then there are no more piles of estimates on my desk, and we have booked so much more work, that I am having trouble finding time to schedule jobs, In the middle of our slow season! Closing Commander has paid for itself multiple times over, Every month that I have had it. I could not be happier with this product. Thank you."

*Jeff Wilensky
Owner, CinderBox Chimney Services*



The Conclusion

Most home service businesses struggle to find the time to email, call or text to follow up with open estimates left with customers, so it just doesn't get done. And, Like Jeff and Kathleen, the cost of marketing, getting good leads, training employees and servicing the customer is no small thing. But easily adding Closing Commander™ to their technology mix to automatically follow up on open estimates has made a remarkable improvement in the effectiveness of their marketing spend, their overall customer service, and most importantly, their stress levels. Simply using the app brought in an additional six figures of revenue in less than five months, and improved the quality and enjoyment of their business.

While 14% more closed estimates is the current average in Closing Commander™, we have seen as much as 40% for some clients. You can go to <https://followupproject.org/> and discover how much money you are losing in your business on a monthly/yearly basis when you don't follow up on every open estimate consistently and automatically.

*For more information or to get started now with a Risk-Free 14 day trial, go to:
<https://www.closingcommander.com>
or contact Jonny Lim at jonny@closingcommander.com.*