

# Snappy answers to TOUGH QUESTIONS

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**Don't be caught off guard. Consider these snappy come backs to hard questions before the questions are asked.**

**H**ave you ever been caught off guard with tough questions like these: Can you just send me a bill? Why are your prices higher than the competitors? My regular plumber said you ripped me off, and I want to know what you're going to do about it?

Perhaps you stumbled through and muttered something incoherent. More likely, you got defensive and made a bad situation worse.

Wouldn't it be nice to have snappy answers to tough questions like these? I've picked up the following suggestions from smart plumbing contractors across the country.

**The customer asks:** "Can you just send me a bill?" Stated another way, "Will you loan me the amount on the invoice?"

**Your response:** "We would be happy to put today's services on your credit card. Do you prefer VISA, MasterCard or American Express?"

Financing programs can help you out here, too. Check into one for your company.

**The customer asks:** "Your father used to send me a bill. Why can't you?"

**Your response:** "You knew my dad? He taught me a lot about plumbing and busi-

ness. One thing he taught me is to keep costs low. Wasted steps mean higher prices for the customer. As part of an overall plan to run an efficient business, we are eliminating paperwork that can cost you money. So, now, we are collecting on the job."

You may also want to head off this question by addressing the payment issue when the call comes into the shop. Instruct employees who take incoming calls to ask, "Will you be paying with cash, check or credit card today, Mr. Smith?" If you have good customer service history, you can ask this only of existing customers who have been billed in the past.

**The customer asks:** "How much for a water heater? I've been calling around and was quoted prices from \$250 to \$400?"

**Your response:** "I understand you want to get the best value for your dollar. It's no fun spending money on home repairs. When you get a quote for a plumbing service over the phone, keep in mind that the price may change once the technician arrives at your home. Perhaps the current plumbing isn't to code. Or maybe there is some problem that the technician cannot know about until he takes a look at your water heater. So, the price could



change. We don't like to work that way. As a professional, our technician must see the problem before he quotes you a price.

"It's a little like when you call a doctor because you know you have a sore throat, but the doctor must see you before he'll write a prescription because could turn out to be strep throat. When our technician comes to your home, he will inspect the water heater and visit with you about your home and water usage. Then he will make a professional recommendation to either repair or replace the unit. He won't begin the repair until you have approved the written proposal. And we will hold to the written price. No surprises.

"So, may I schedule you for a service appointment?"

**The customer says:** No thanks.

**Your response:** "No problem. But, can ask you to do me a favor? If you have any problem with the service you received today, please give me a call back. I will send my top plumber to your home right away to take care of you. OK?"

Resist saying things like: "You get what you pay for." Or, "You'll be sorry."