

ESTIMATES OR ASSESSMENTS?

4 minute read

Check out any restoration website and right at the top, usually in bold capital letters, you will see the words “**FREE ESTIMATES.**” For contractors, it’s always been a great way to catch a customer’s eye. Just get me out there and I will give you an estimate, hoping to convince you to hire me when I am out there.



Is this the right approach? Is this a sound [marketing or production decision](#)? Many people would disagree with this approach, especially in our industry. Running out to give estimates can work for handymen or kitchen renovation companies, but for restoration companies, we might be getting ourselves into some trouble if we use this method of business development. Should we be offering estimates, or should we think about offerings assessments instead?

Let’s examine a difference between these two words that can have similar meanings but different obligations. Let’s look at the difference between estimates and assessments. Estimates, as every homeowner understands them, involve visiting the property, observing the work to be performed, and generating a quote for the services that includes a fixed price for your services. It puts you into a corner when addressing the work. What happens if you start your work and, like in most cases, discover additional damage or severity that will require additional work and incur a higher cost? There is no way to address this without it looking like a “bait and switch” issue. Your credibility will be put at question and you might be forced to do additional work for no additional money.

Now, let’s look at the concept of an assessment. You will be doing the same thing as an estimate- visit the property, assess the extent of damage, and discuss ways to handle the issues. The only thing that you are not obligated to do is to give a quote for services. You are free to discuss ways to handle payment, from insurance claim processes to other options. But you are going to avoid obligating yourself to set a price.

This is a small but distinct difference between the two words. Giving an assessment brings you the opportunity to show your professional expertise and give the client a direction to go without limiting your company to a quote based on a first-glance analysis.

For marketing purposes, the concept of a free estimate has been thrown around for



years as a way of [attracting potential business](#) - yes, this is a viable option. As a pure marketing tool, it will get the phone to ring. **Just remember that you will get the same number of calls using the term “assessment” instead of “estimate.”** When it comes to water damage, homeowners want to know what they are facing and, if possible, their options for payment. It’s important to give them an idea of a ballpark cost for services, but it is more important to identify the damage, the risks, and the possible solutions.

Finally, when deciding upon the difference between an estimate and an assessment, it is important to coordinate the messaging with the words. On most websites, once again, there are ads for free estimates. That language pushes the price aspect of the visit, but when we market a free **assessment**, we must make sure to make the language fit the purpose of the assessment. Talk about the visit - the analysis of the damage, the search for the cause and extent, and the possible remedies for the homeowner. When that is put into the body of the website, the client has a clear understanding of the intent of the visit, and will be focused on those actions, with pricing being a secondary by-product of the visit.

Think twice about committing to estimates and instead consider providing assessments of damage. This will give you more flexibility, better peace of mind and more happy customers in the end. Do you want to talk? **Call me now: 908-553-6295**



By: Bill Giannone, Co-Founder The CREST Network, LLC.

[Nationally recognized coach, consultant, and trainer](#)

[25-year Wall Street veteran](#)