

National Institute
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MARKETING MATTERS

Treat your marketing like a campaign

You are no doubt familiar with political campaigns. The candidates have a message they try to repeat to as many constituents as possible in speeches, advertising and printed materials. The campaign approach is one you would do well to adopt with your marketing. If you decide to expand your business into a new region or offer a new service, you need to make decisions in a systematic fashion before you launch your campaign.

1. Decide what sets your company or service apart from the competition.
2. Identify the prospects most likely to be interested in your service. If you are offering upscale green remodeling, for example, there is no point in marketing to apartment-dwellers.
3. Craft your marketing messages in terms of customer benefits. Be able to answer the question of how you will make their lives better or solve problems they are having.

4. Prepare supporting materials to get your message in front of your target audience. Such materials may include advertising, brochures, postcard mailers, web pages or emails. There is no one right method. Even speaking engagements can help you reach those who need to hear you.
5. Develop a special offer that will serve as a call to action when your message reaches a prospect. You may offer a discount for those who call within a certain time, a free add-on service or a chance at a nice giveaway.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Nuts & bolts
- 2008 Executive Leadership Conference

NIR helps you boost your business

From networking to education to marketing assistance, the NIR supports restoration specialists. **434.973.4200**

6. Prepare ahead for the sales conversation with qualified prospects. Learn what their goals are and what has kept them from achieving those goals. Show them how your service can help them be successful. Most businesses that do marketing decide on the message, the plan for some advertising and quit. For your marketing campaign to be successful, however, you must keep moving on several fronts so that your efforts complement each other.

The danger of hidden methamphetamine use

Using independent contractors is a great way to hold down employee expenses. But businesses must be careful not to cross lines that will cause the Internal Revenue Service to take notice.

The distinction is important since businesses do not have to pay the employer portion of Social Security and Medicare taxes on independent contractors; nor do they have to provide independent contractors with workers' compensation insurance or other benefits.

Basically, an independent contractor is one who produces a product or result for a business but can accomplish that work by any means he or she chooses. The employer has no say in how the work is done.

Individuals are considered independent contractors if they:

- make significant investment in their work.
- do not get directly reimbursed for expenses.
- have the ability to make profit or loss on their work.
- receive no benefits such as health insurance or paid vacation from the company.

Individuals are more likely to be considered employees if they receive extensive instruction on:

- how, when or where to do the work they will perform
- what tools or equipment to use
- where to purchase supplies and services.

If the IRS rules that your independent contractor is actually your employee, you could be hit with significant interest and penalties for back taxes not paid.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES



Phoenix is Coming!

You don't just attend the Executive Leadership Conference; you PARTICIPATE! Join NIR and your peers across the nation at the best networking opportunity in the insurance restoration industry.

This year's line-up of featured sessions and roundtable discussions will give you new information, new contacts and renewed motivation to lead your business forward.



Conference topics:

May 14 - Featured Workshop - Project management

- Techniques for scheduling, estimating, crew management, communicating with clients and getting your price.

May 15-16 - General Sessions and Roundtable Discussions:

- Mastering fundamentals to your business strong
- Influencing others the right way.
- Planning for growth.
- Diversifying your business.
- Handling the unique challenges in a large commercial loss.
- Investing your energy in your best prospects.
- Promoting your business by telling your story.

Don't miss this opportunity to maintain your edge in insurance restoration. For more details and to register, go to www.nir-inc.com/conference or call 434.973.4200.

NUTS AND BOLTS

Be smart with your mailing



With postage costs going up one cent for first class mail on May 12, you'll be looking for ways to hold down mailing and shipping costs. The U.S. Postal Service, mindful of the problem the increase will create for small businesses, is offering breaks on Express Mail and Priority Mail.

It used to be that the Post Office would charge one price for all shipments in a particular category. Now there are more options. Express Mail will be priced based on zones with customers receiving discounts for volume mailing or mailing early. Customers using mPriority Mail can save 3.5 percent by using electronic postage or meeting other requirements.

All shipping companies are feeling the pinch of the economic slowdown so the best advice is to check around. Those who compare prices and negotiate will save money.

The cost of crashes

American motorists spend more than \$160 billion a year on traffic crashes. That translates to \$1,051 per person according to a research study that Cambridge Systematics, Inc., conducted for the American Automobile Association.

Nearly 43,000 people die each year on the nation's highways. AAA is recommending that motor vehicle crashes be viewed as a public health risk. The agency is urging lawmakers to adopt stiffer penalties for drunk and impaired driving and make safety a priority in transportation planning projects.

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