

National Institute
of Restoration, Inc.

nir-inc.com



2010

OnSite

Volume 12 • Issue 9 September 2010

MARKETING MATTERS

Use video to promote your business

Since many people respond more to a story and moving pictures than other types of content, video is becoming the favorite type of online tool for businesses of all sizes.

It is not that hard to make a video to promote your business. You just need to follow a few simple rules and keep in mind that people are looking for good content, not a polished presentation.

Here are three basics to keep in mind for shooting a video for your business.

Get a camera that includes a easy upload option for your video. The best known one on the market is the Flip Cam. You don't have many editing options with the software provided but the ease of use makes it more likely that you will follow through.

Plan your shoot carefully. You'll want to shoot exactly what you need so that you won't have to edit anything afterwards. By deciding what you want to show and what you will say, you'll be able to get what you need.



Be close enough to get good sound. The quality of the picture is not really an issue; the main problem with online videos is with sound. You need to be close to the subject so everything will be audible or invest in a good external microphone.

Here are some ideas for your content.

- **Answer your customer's major questions.** You know what they are because you field the same questions from potential customers with every sale. If you video can effectively answer common questions, you can promote your business while also providing an online resource for customers.
- **Do an office or job site tour.** Simply letting people see some of the work you have done or the people in your office helps them remember you.
- **Interview your best customer.** If you have a particularly good relationship with a customer, ask him or her to talk with you on a short video that talks about their experiences with your work.
- **Show some specific specialty in your work.** Let people see how you would dry out a flooded building by lining up the equipment and talking about how you use it. You could also add some photographs of before and after to showcase your expertise.

Presentation pitfalls you can avoid

As you try to win a prospect's business, keep in mind these pitfalls that can leave you empty handed at the end of a presentation.

Failing to connect with the prospect's needs. Do you know what your prospect's specific goals are? If you can address those goals with your service you'll be able to win your prospect's confidence.

- **Not considering other influencers.** Purchasing decisions involve more than just the client or couple. Often you must look at your service from the perspective of the agent or adjuster. Consider all parties involved in the decision-making process and look at your service from their perspective.
- **Telling everything you know.** An information dump can leave a prospect overwhelmed and confused. Statistics are a great way to reinforce your points but only if they have a clear bearing on the end benefits. Don't bog your client down with data.
- **Lacking substance.** You may have a great presentation style but if you are short on information, you may not walk away with the contract. Stories and facts are great ways to make a connection but you must be sure the client knows how you can make a difference for him or her.



MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Celebrating labor

Employees are the ones who shape the success of a business day after day. They take care of customers, provide the service, handle the billing and maintain the supplies. As business consultant Rhonda Abrams notes, by honoring your employees, you will help your business grow.

Large corporations consider employees as members of a team; with smaller businesses, employees are like family. Families and businesses thrive when all members are respected.

Abrams offers these reminders to get the most out of your labor force:

Hire well. Look for someone who has the ability to learn quickly with good common sense, good work habits and a willingness to take on any job. If an applicant lacks one of these qualities, keep looking.

Train. Taking time to train a new employee well

saves you time in the long run. Cross-train so that employees can back each other up.

Communicate. Hold short frequent meetings to share good and bad news. That will make employees feel included and be willing to take action when they know what is going on in the business.

Empower. Do not be a micromanager. Nothing saps morale more quickly than constraining an employee with narrow rules. Let them use their brains.

Give feedback. Employees won't improve without regular, constructive feedback. Don't just complain about work that was not done to your standards. Give employees specific suggestions.

Acknowledge and reward. If you think that you don't need to thank your employees because their pay should be thanks enough, you will find yourself facing turnover when the economy gets better. Find opportunities to recognize good work.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Nuts & bolts
- Working smarter

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Working Smarter

Easily distracted? Use a timer

If you tend to jump from task to task and feel like you are not getting anything finished, try using a timer. That tip comes from People On The Go founder Pierre Khawand who says that buying a timer can be one of your best investments because it forces you to focus.

He suggests setting a countdown time for a specific period that you want to devote to a task. Once you set that timer for 40 minutes (or whatever time you wish), you are declaring to yourself that you have officially started a task. The timer helps you stay committed and helps you focus on one task at a time.

A timer helps you be accountable for passing minutes. It will help you better estimate how much time a task generally takes and will also help you maintain focus. If you do not allow yourself to hop to a different task, you will be forced to tackle difficult problems or issues you have been avoiding by designating a set time for it.

Khawand says that after working with a timer, you will become more efficient and be able to accomplish tasks more quickly. And contrary to what you might assume, the timer actually relieves the stress that comes from unfinished work or guilt over other things you should also be handling.



Managing your To-Do list

Technology has revolutionized the to-do list with several options to help you keep organized. Here are some you might consider:

Google Tasks – A free web-based program that has been around since 2008, Google Tasks is available from your Gmail, Google Calendar or iGoogle interface. It's a natural solution if you're already using Gmail or Google's calendar because tasks can easily be shifted from your list to the calendar.

Remember the Milk (RTM) – a web-based application that is either free or \$25/year



on. Described as the "Swiss Army knife" of to-do list managers,

RTM gives you access to your list from any smart phone or the web. You can text and email entries to your address book and multiple people can contribute to the list if needed. RTM also has a location-based application so you can find convenient shops if you have to buy something on the way home.

Things – for Macs. This polished application is a Mac-only tool that costs \$50 and integrates with iCal and iPhone. You can group your tasks by projects, area of responsibility and tag everything to help with sorting.

Of course there is always the tried and true **pad and pencil** list which is relatively inexpensive, never breaks down, loses a connection or gets a virus. What's more, the old-fashioned list gives you the pleasure of crossing off a task when you've finished it.



NUTS AND BOLTS

Cement that eats carbon



All that brainpower being applied to the problem of global warming has produced yet another product to deal with carbon emissions a cement that consumes more carbon than it requires during production. Novacem, developed by a British company, claims to absorb more carbon than it releases.

That quality gives Novacem great potential for advancing the green building movement.

The construction industry is a heavyweight when it comes to energy consumption. The global demand for cement is \$130 billion worldwide and the process to make it produces an estimated five percent of the world's manmade carbon dioxide emissions.

Cement is made from limestone which releases a huge amount of carbon when it is mined and even more when it is heated to more than 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. According to some estimates, three billion tons of cement are turned into 30 bil-

lion tons of concrete each year in a process that produces more CO2 emissions than the entire airline business.

Novacem is based on magnesium silicates that contain no stored carbon. Cement produced from these silicates needs to be heated only to about 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit, compounding the energy savings.

States rush to embrace E-Verify

As the immigration debate heats up, 12 states and more than a dozen cities have made the E-Verify system mandatory to identify illegal workers.

However, there are lingering questions about the accuracy of E-Verify and whether or not businesses should be required to bear those costs. About 7 percent of U.S. citizens and legal immigrant workers were wrongly determined ineligible, and the system mistakenly cleared illegal workers 54 percent of the time according to an independent review by the Migration Policy Institute earlier this year.

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