



2007 Tech Report

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A Monthly Update and Forum for Restoration Contractor Specialists

Marketing Matters

Checking out your brand

It doesn't cost millions to create a winning brand image according to Kim Gordon who writes for *Entrepreneur Magazine*. Gordon says that consistency and follow-through allow small business owners to keep their brands on track. Here's how:

Differentiate your brand. Branding is all about sending a strong and consistent message. If you are in a highly competitive service area, your brand will separate your company from the pack.

You want every contact a customer has with you to leave the same good impression.

If you have not done a competitive analysis for a while, make time to examine your competitors' ads, review their PR coverage, research them online and buy their products. Then decide what makes your product or service different or better. This differentiation sets you apart.

Promise value. Once you know what sets you apart, redefine your message so that it resonates with your best prospects. The more you know about who those people are the more targeted your message can be. Research will help you choose the people most receptive to the unique qualities you offer.

Be a market leader. Delivering value to your target audience over the long term means that your company will live up to its branding efforts and will become a market leader. Focus on improving your customers' experiences and interactions with your company.

Integrate your messages. Every interaction with a customer must be uniform across all marketing channels from your website to your stationery, brochures and newsletters. Take a long, hard look at all of the messages you are sending out. Are they consistent? Do they all have the same look and feel?

Over time, different pieces can become mismatched and disconnected from other marketing efforts. If that has happened to your materials, it's time to realign them with your company's core messages to create a stronger brand image.

Highlights

- Nuts & bolts
- Working smarter
- Hints to make you more efficient

Management Issues

Google redefines employee benefits

Google may be known as a popular verb meaning to research a name through the Internet. But the company is becoming known for something else – providing its employees wall-to-wall perks. Because of the extensive employee benefits it offers, Google has been named the top place to work in *Fortune* magazine's top-100 list.

Google employees never work more than 150-feet from a food source and multiple cafeterias at the California offices they serve free meals to employees from early morning to late night. Drivers get free oil changes, car washes and a \$5,000 subsidy towards the purchase of a hybrid car.

The company offers a workout room, free laundry and barber services. There are childcare facilities for employees with young children and if pets are well-behaved, they can accompany their masters to the office. In addition to good medical and dental plans, doctors at the facilities provide free treatment.

Employment lawyer Mark Shickman says there is something "big brotherish" about Google's catering to every need of its employees. But one thing for sure – in raising the bar for employee benefits, Google is testing whether or not these lavish perks will result in greater employee loyalty.

Contract employee or real employee?

If you have independent contractors working for you, it's a good idea to check to make sure they are correctly classified. Why? Because you don't pay workman's comp on contract employees. Nor do you withhold income taxes. A mistake in classification can earn you some steep penalties from the IRS.

A contract employee works for several people, does a specific job for you and then moves on. A true employee works for you and no one else. You call the shots and determine how they spend their time.

A statutory employee falls in the middle. Such workers provide services such as traveling sales reps. You are required to withhold social security from the compensation.

NIR helps you boost your business

From networking to education to marketing assistance, the National Institute of Restoration supports restoration specialists. 434.973.4200.

Working Smarter

Controlling email

Set aside time to do your email and relegate that task to a specific period rather than letting email interrupt you all day.

Be wary of using the “Reply All” or “CC” options. Unless they are really necessary, you’ll just clutter up other people’s email boxes.

If you want to cut down on email clutter, here’s a neat trick. Use codes to let people know they don’t need to reply. It’s somewhat unique to tell people they don’t have to be overly polite but if you are sending an email and don’t need (or want) a response, you can use the codes NRN (for no reply needed) or NTN (no thanks needed) to save a few emails from coming back to you.

Dealing with email glut

Email is supposed to be a productivity enhancer but it can also be a tremendous waste of time. If you divide your yearly salary by 120,000 to get your per-minute wage and then figure out how many minutes during the work day you spend on email, you’ll see a monetary dimension to the email problem.

Here are some ways to avoid email overload.

- Use the subject line to summarize, not describe. That gives readers the chance to decide whether the email is relevant.
- Send or copy email only to those who need to see it.
- Use separate messages rather than BCC someone. If you ask what you want the copied person to know, you may not need to send a BCC.
- Make action requests clear. If you want something to get done, say so and be clear about it.

Nuts and Bolts

California limits formaldehyde

California air regulators have passed the world’s toughest controls on toxic formaldehyde in wood products widely used in kitchen cabinets, countertops and other construction. Widely used as a glue in construction materials, formaldehyde has been shown to cause throat cancer, respiratory ailments and other problems.

The action was cited as a tremendous victory for those working with wood products.

Nation’s greenest buildings listed

The annual list compiled by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) has drawn twice as many entries as in previous years – a sign that green building is catching on. The AIA recently released its list of the nation’s most environmentally friendly buildings on its website at <http://www.aiaopen.org/>.

The list includes:

- an art center in Boston whose grassy courtyard is irrigated by rainwater collected on the roof;
- a visitor center in Texas where big overhanging roofs, flaps and porches shield interior spaces from sun;
- a courthouse in Eugene, Oregon with raised courtrooms and an air distribution system under the floor;
- a public library in New Haven, Conn., that includes a public park and sanctuary for migrating birds,
- a house in Santa Monica, Calif., that uses natural ventilation and optimizes passive solar heating,
- an energy center in Hawaii that is cooled using deep sea water. .



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Three easy ways to register:

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