



A Monthly Update and Forum for Restoration Contractor Specialists

Marketing Matters

Back to the basics in marketing

Methods may change but the principles behind marketing do not. Here are some common marketing strategies from business adviser Vicki Gerson that will help you be most effective in your efforts.

Have the right budget. Make no mistake – marketing costs money. You need to attach a budget to your goals. Therefore if you are going to introduce a new product or service, you will need to carefully decide what you can spend on marketing and how you can best distribute those dollars.

Use the right tactics. Look at where your customers come from and the group you are trying to target. If you have a local business, your customers are likely to come from your geographic area. If you work primarily on the internet, your customers may come from all over the world. Decide where you want to reach people before deciding how to do it. Billboards do not work for broad-based marketing but they could be highly effective to reach certain local or regional traffic.

Send the right message. Tell the customer what you can do for them. Don't squander marketing boasting about yourself. If you offer personal service that sets you apart from your competitors, be sure your customers know that fact.

Do the right research. Find out how your product or service is selling in other locations. Is this the type of product your customers will purchase? Can they afford it?

Know your customers' wants and needs. You cannot sell something that your customer does not want. One thing all customers want is a personal interest in their job so when you are trying to market your business, that quality is an important factor to consider.

Be consistent. It takes time to have an impact. Marketing is not a one-hit project. Consistency of effort and message is the key to success.

Study results. Effective marketing will have an impact but it can take time to measure. Be patient.

Highlights

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

Management Issues

Work cell phones and cars

There is no federal law that prohibits handling work-related cell phone calls while driving but common sense tells us that the practice is not safe. For managers, the question of employee's work-related cell phone calls in the car is more than a matter of casual discussion. It could be a question of legal liability if a driver has an accident while handling business on the cell phone while driving.

We have all seen people who are challenged when multitasking. They drive over the yellow line or run a red light because they are so engrossed in their phone conversation. Some studies have shown that driving while talking on a cell phone is actually more dangerous than driving drunk. Consequently, several states including New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and California have already passed laws requiring that drivers use "hands-free" telephone devices when driving with cell phones.

Another 38 states made an effort to pass similar legislation last year.

Can you and your company be held liable for an auto accident caused by an employee using his or her cell phone for work-related matters?

The short answer is yes according to the *Iowa Employment Law Letter*.

In a Virginia state court case, *Yoon v Wagner*, an attorney ran over a 15-year-old girl while driving home from work. She was making work-related cell phone calls when the accident occurred and others asserted that her commute was part of her extended workday. She was hit with a \$2 million wrongful death verdict and lost her law license as a result of the accident.

While the employer was not implicated in the case, it is not hard to imagine an argument that since the employer is reaping the benefit of the employee's work-related act, the employer should also reap the detriment when an accident occurs.

It may be time for a written cell-phone policy for your business. One suggestion would be to amend the employee handbook to prohibit cell phone use while driving unless the employee has a hands-free device for talking.

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

Make your Internet searches work

The key to an effective Internet search is using the right technique. Here are some suggestions from business consultant Donna Gunther on ways to find what you are looking for on the world wide web:

- Carefully select your search terms. Choose terms that are very specific to your topic instead of broad, general terms likely to return thousands of possible sites. One way to get more effective phrases is to look at relevant sites you have already discovered and choose terms on that site to find similar ones.
- Use quotation marks. If you are seeking a specific phrase such as “insurance restoration contractor” put the phrase in quotation marks so that the search engine will look for only those words in that order. Searches without quotes on that topic would turn up thousands of hits for insurance, for restoration and for contractor.
- Use Boolean operators. Boolean operators are words that allow you to combine search terms. They include “and” and “or” which tells the search engine that you want to look for “disaster restoration contractor” or “insurance restoration contractor.”
- Use a metasearch engine. These are sites that search and save you the trouble from doing a search on Google, Yahoo or Ask because they do all search engines in one operation. One such search engine is www.dogpile.com.

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Nuts and Bolts

Drug use declining?

Fewer than four percent of current and prospective U.S. workers tested positive for marijuana or amphetamine drug use in 2006 according to a report by drug-testing firm Quest Diagnostics. That is the lowest level ever recorded by the firm.

When Quest released its first report in 1988, 13.6 percent of workers and applicants tested positive for drug use. The firm said the report does not necessarily mean that drug use has gone down. It's possible that drug-using workers are just avoiding companies that conduct drug testing.

Stolen copper like gold?

Copper has become the new gold according to some law enforcement officials who are noticing an increase in copper thefts since last year when the price of the metal spiked. A pound of copper is worth about \$3 at local scrap metal companies in Florida, where thefts of copper from new buildings and businesses has mushroomed. Enterprising thieves are taking copper from work vans and even from air conditioning units.

An international demand for building supplies coupled with a labor strike at one of the world's largest copper mines in Chile last year have combined to drive up the cost of the metal.

Green blocks use recycled glass

Concrete blocks that are made from as much as 65 percent recycled glass are one of a host of building materials that are environmentally friendly. EPI Concrete Products in Grandville, Illinois has started experimenting with using ground-up glass to replace some of the pea stone and sand used to make the blocks. The cost of the blocks containing recycled glass is slightly lower and the appearance is the same as traditional concrete blocks. An EPI spokesman said the blocks are as durable and easy to work with as traditional blocks.

Cranes in short supply

Cranes and crane operators are becoming a scarce commodity in the construction industry as booming commercial construction, an aging work force and more certification requirements are all putting the squeeze on cranes.

The demand for cranes is causing construction firms to line up cranes and crane operators early in the process – sometimes even before the designs are completed – to ensure that their projects are not delayed.