



# 2007 Tech Report

Volume 9 • Issue 7

National Institute of Restoration, Inc.

July 2007

*A Monthly Update and Forum for Restoration Contractor Specialists*

## Marketing Matters

### Maximize media hits

One of the best ways to get publicity for your business is to be quoted in the media. Reporters are always looking for people to comment on some aspect of a current issue in the community. You can establish yourself as the go-to person for reporters if you follow a few guidelines.

First, respond to queries as quickly as possible. You want to be the first person the reporter talks with because the points you make will seem more informative than if he or she has already talked with three other people in your field.

Second, be prepared. Anticipate what a reporter might ask. Suppose you get a message that a reporter wants to talk with you about a new trend in putting metal roofs on houses. Make notes on three to five interesting points you could make. Are metal roofs more durable and why? How does the cost compare to other types of roofing and is the extra expense justified? What about supplies...is there a backlog of orders or can they be installed quickly?

Third, have examples readily available. Examples and specifics are what get you quoted. It is hard to remember facts on the fly and so why you are jotting down the points you want to make, note some examples with names, dates or other specifics.

Finally, turn down an interview if it is not in your area of expertise. You'll win favor with a reporter if you can refer them to someone else with expertise.

### Why people buy

When you are planning your marketing campaign, remember that there are two reasons why people make a purchase:

- the rational reason
- the emotional reason

The emotional reason is a far more powerful influencer. To tap into the emotional reasons for a purchase, you must be able to identify your client's needs and wants and understand how your service can satisfy those.

## Highlights

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

## Management Issues

### Challenges of FMLA

The law is clear about how you treat employees who are eligible to take time from work under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Eligible employees – those who have worked for you for at least 12 months and worked 1,250 hours during that 12-month period – are entitled to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave for any of the following reasons:

- the birth of a child or to care for a child;
- placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care;
- care of a spouse, child or parent with serious health conditions;
- the employee's own serious health condition that makes him unable to perform the functions of his job.

The law is fairly straight-forward and you must make arrangements to cover the absent employee's workload while he or she is on FMLA. But a challenge management is sometimes faced with what to do when the employee returns from FMLA.

Suppose the employee wants his or her own job back and you have filled the temporary vacancy with a much better employee. Does FMLA require you to give the job back to the original employee?

The answer, generally speaking, is yes. FMLA regulations state that an "employee is entitled to be reinstated even if the employee has been replaced or the position has been restructured to accommodate the employee's absence." However FMLA does allow you to restore the employee to an equivalent position.

That means the equivalent job must involve "virtually identical" duties, responsibilities, skills, effort and authority. The equivalent position must also have equivalent benefits and other terms of employment as the previous job.

FMLA cases have been handled in a variety of ways. Some courts have ruled that you could assign the returning worker to a different shift and keep the better employee in the old position. However, to play it safe, you need to give the employee his or her old job back.

## NIR helps you boost your business

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## Working Smarter

### Planning for a disaster

With hurricanes, fires and floods regularly making news, you should have a disaster plan in place to protect your business and home so that you can recover as quickly as possible. How can you become disaster-proof at work and at home? Here are some suggestions from business consultant Donna Gunter that apply to individuals as well as to small businesses:

**Know the location of your vital papers.** You must quickly be able to put into a folder the insurance contact information, deeds or lease agreements, picture IDs and even copies of utility bills. If you are asked to leave an area, you'll need to prove where you live and that you are who you claim to be, especially when applying for disaster assistance.

**Have an online backup of all your data.** You can use an external portable hard drive to save critical data. For an annual fee, you can also use one of the many online services that give you unlimited amounts of space and encrypt your data to the same security standards that banks use. The fee is miniscule compared to the cost of restoring data. One website to check out for such services is Carbonite ([www.carbonite.com](http://www.carbonite.com)).

**Create a file of vital contact information.** Put your vital information including usernames and passcodes, family and client information on a flash drive that you can take with you. You'll also need such things as school contact information if you have children and the website of your local media in case you have to evacuate and want to keep up with conditions at home.

**Know what basic equipment you will need** to get your business up and running. You'll need at the minimum a computer, monitor and related equipment as well as such items as software, a phonebook and basic office supplies.

**Have a backup telephone plan.** Consider upgrading your cell phone plan if you have clients scattered in wide areas. Get a prepaid calling card for emergencies.

**Have a backup Internet access plan.** In the event of a hurricane or flood, you could be weeks without electrical service. You'll need internet access wherever you set up shop so think about how you would get this service in a different location.

**Outline office procedures** to help you operate or be able to delegate tasks. Information stored in your head is not helpful if you must rely on others to get your business up and running again. Document office procedures as well as computer and client information so that everything can be available to another employee.

## Nuts and Bolts

### China's impact on construction

According to the *Construction Forecast Monthly*, construction spending in China has increased 165% in the past four years and is still expanding at more than 25% per year. The boom has created an even larger increase in production capacity for construction materials.

Changes in the supply of domestic construction materials in China can abruptly change the world commodity prices – a factor now built into U.S. construction pricing models.

Observers believe the Chinese economy is overheated and when the economic bubble reaches the bursting point, the change could send a flood of Chinese products onto the world market, depressing materials prices in the U.S.

### Glass walls favored over balconies

High rise residential buildings in major cities are taking on a new look. The conventional balcony is being replaced with glass that can provide a view and the feel of the outdoors without the disadvantages of bad weather, bugs or fumes. Some luxury buildings are showing an ultramodern highly-engineered floor-to-ceiling glass curtain wall that can slide away to open the living space to the outdoors.

At least one New York City architecture firm has proclaimed the word “balcony” as obsolete. The all-glass enclosures are attractive to upscale buyers and also avoid some safety concerns of traditional balconies.

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