

[savvy special report]

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Construction Marketing 101

Many people confuse sales and marketing, but they are not the same. While sales is an “in-house” process, marketing can and should usually be outsourced so that the owner and operations team have adequate time to provide stellar service to new and existing clients.

When it comes to marketing, first, it's important to remember that a potential buyer of services is never going to be talked into anything. Your aim is to be there when they need the service you offer. They need to be reminded on a repeated basis, so when they are ready, they will think of you. Your future customers do not log on to social media looking to buy something. No form of marketing can offer truly instant results.

Your “brand” relates to you personally as well as professionally. Personal branding establishes your credibility, experience, and knowledge. You can use storytelling, creativity, humor, and inspiration to shape your company's public and private perceptions and forge an emotional connection. To begin your brand marketing, you must deeply understand your buyer's persona and what resonates with them. Of course, you must also know your position in the marketplace and what makes you unique among your competitors.

I believe the best approaches to marketing for the construction industry are:

Direct Marketing

While mass mailing to prospects, to zip codes, to mailing lists, and to organization members is a waste of time and resources, direct marketing is different. A direct marketing campaign might include a letter, enclosed offer, or postcard sent directly to a carefully researched “perfect client.” The direct marketing piece must be

carefully tailored to the person who is to receive it. Consistency of message and timing of delivery are key.

Email Marketing

Getting a potential client to open your email before it hits the spam folder is the challenge here. It is paramount to obtain the correct email address of the person you are targeting and provide an enticing subject line to get your message opened. It also helps greatly if the recipient knows the sender. People already get too much email, so it is important not to bombard your target while still being consistent with your timing.

Relationship Marketing

Remember, it is not just who you know but who your clients know that is important. A satisfied customer is always your best salesperson. If you're reluctant to ask for referrals and testimonials, a marketing outsource can be invaluable. Strong ratings have been proven to “tip” a potential buyer into serviceable action.

Relationship marketing is focusing on your existing customer base, reminding them they made the right decision and turning them into advocates for your services. The value of this approach is the cost of retaining customers is much lower than attracting new clients. However, you must seek ways to constantly improve customers' experience; don't rely on past performance.

Referrals and client testimonials are most useful on websites and postcards. The order of your reference list is important. In a list of five references, a very busy person might only call two (often, the first and last).

Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Also known as “influencer marketing.” The “trust factor” of the influencer is the main consideration. Those best at this form of marketing are your supportive friends and clients who consistently say nice things about your work when asked.

Websites

Too often, companies create what they believe is an effective



website but is, in reality, just a reflection of their ego. An outside evaluation is necessary because in-house staff won't want to endanger their positions with a critical assessment of an owner-created site. One must place themselves in the mind of the buyer. What are they *really* looking for? Price? Schedule? Quality? It is rarely all three, even though they might tell you it is.

Content Marketing

Content marketing is a key instrument in your digital marketing efforts. By definition, content marketing involves creating, publishing, and distributing content to a target audience. Common platforms are social media networks, blogs, visual content, and tools like eBooks or webinars. Most people use search engines such as Google to find the information they need to make a purchase or educate themselves; providing great content allows targets to find the information they're searching for with your name on it, establishing you as an expert.

The newest form of content, and a really effective mechanism, is video. People want to see who they are buying from, as this creates a feeling of trust and camaraderie. Keep it short and sweet – the attention span of the average viewer is 30 seconds. Creating and uploading videos to your website or YouTube channel can be helpful in brand-building. Some video apps even allow one to analyze, cultivate, and score leads based on their activity.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

Nowadays, it's essential that your business services are visible on search engine results pages, or SERPs. When a searcher types in a certain keyword, SEM enables your business to appear on the first page of results. Surveys show that few browsers go past the first page. An SEM campaign may include free SEO (search engine optimization) and PPC (pay-per-click advertising). Also, all the strategies discussed above will contribute to effective SEM.

In conclusion, there are three principles to a successful business:

1. Getting the work
2. Doing the work
3. Getting compensated for the work

The easiest one is doing the work. A marketing agency can help you get the right work and see dividends from it – not just in getting paid for a job well done but in seeing future dividends from satisfying a single client who spreads the word. ▼

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