FILLING YOUR SALES PIPELINE
with Marketing Tactics for Green Industry Professionals
# Contents

Preface ........................................................................................................... 3  
Chapter 1 – What is Marketing? ................................................................. 5  
Chapter 2 – The Marketing Process ......................................................... 7  
Chapter 3 – Preparation .............................................................................. 8  
Chapter 4 – The Marketing Plan: Goals, Strategy, and Tactics .................. 15  
Chapter 5 – Your Marketing Message ...................................................... 18  
Chapter 6 – An Overview of Marketing Tactics ........................................ 20  
Chapter 7 – Outbound Marketing Tactics .................................................. 23  
Chapter 8 – The Internet and Inbound Marketing ...................................... 35  
Chapter 9 – Your Website .......................................................................... 37  
Chapter 10 – Crafting Content .................................................................. 43  
Chapter 11 – Search Engine Marketing and Search Engine Optimization ... 45  
Chapter 12 – Blogging .............................................................................. 47  
Chapter 13 – Facebook™ .......................................................................... 49  
Chapter 14 – Google™ ............................................................................. 51  
Chapter 15 – More Social Media Opportunities ...................................... 52  
Chapter 16 – The Ultimate Marketing Tactics .......................................... 55  
Chapter 17 – Your Marketing Budget ...................................................... 61  
Chapter 18 – Measurement and Tracking .................................................. 61  
Chapter 19 – Making it all Happen. ............................................................ 63  
Chapter 20 – Final Thoughts .................................................................... 65  
Appendix A – Marketing Resources ........................................................... 67
Welcome to Ewing! Your Education Services Department is delighted to present to you our Third Annual Business Development Workshop: Filling your Sales Pipeline with Marketing Tactics for Green Industry Professionals. For the past 21 years, Ewing has offered its customers educational programs specifically designed to help them improve profit performance.

The reality of this uncertain economy has taken a large bite out of consumer confidence, which has caused a throttling back of discretionary spending. A shrinking market results in fewer prospects, carefully watching their budgets!

However, this sketchy economic condition has created a terrific opportunity for those who have the foresight and gumption to craft and implement a marketing plan. For the past several seasons, many companies in the Green Industry have been slashing their advertising and marketing budgets and activities. While your competitors are cautiously guarding their forts, you have been given the unique opportunity to visibly stand out amongst the crowd.

This eBook will introduce you to the fundamentals of marketing. The good news is that the techniques discussed in this program can be executed without having to spend big bucks to achieve profitable results.

The purpose of this year’s Business Workshop is to provide you with the tools to keep your sales pipeline flowing with a constant supply of quality prospects. In addition, we will share with you marketing methods that will keep you in touch with your important network of referrals and associates.

We will dive deeply into the pool of marketing tactics, looking carefully at traditional marketing methods, Internet marketing, social media and content marketing.
We have three primary goals for this workshop: First, we want to communicate the value, power and influence of marketing. This discipline is often misunderstood and confused with selling. Second, we will walk you through the process of creating a simple, manageable and effective marketing plan. Finally, our goal is to motivate you to take action! We want you to implement and measure your marketing plan.

We will provide you with a simple yet succinct definition of marketing. We’ll have you take a look at effective marketing techniques that work for those competing in the Green Industry. We’ll examine what marketing can do for your business. We’ll offer actionable advice and help you steer clear of marketing pitfalls. We’ll help you fill your sales pipeline with a steady flow of revenue generating prospects.

I know this eBook contains a lot of information. If you can’t find the time to read it all, I encourage you to do just one thing: Read Chapter 16 and DO it! If you do employ the principles, the strategies, and the tactics...your business and/or your career will reap substantial rewards. I am excited to share this story with you, because I know that those who embrace the ideas will experience insanely great results. I’ve practiced these principles and have been handsomely rewarded. You can too. Enjoy the experience!

Happy Trails!

John Binkele
Director of Business Education
Ewing Irrigation Products
“Maximize the customer experience and you will have tapped into your most powerful marketing tool – your satisfied customers.”

John Binkele

Chapter 1 – What is Marketing?

Marketing is essentially everything a company does to catch and keep customers. It’s your company name. Your logo. Your business card. The way you answer the phone. The appearance of your trucks and your personnel. It’s the manner in which you treat your customers. It’s your website, your Facebook page and what you Tweet. It’s your blog, your image, your reputation, your brand.

Marketing is what differentiates your company from others who compete in your marketplace. Marketing helps create the desire for customers to buy from your company.

Marketing is NOT selling. Sales is a different discipline altogether. Using a fishing analogy, marketing is the “bait” that lures your “fish” (prospective customer) to your business. Selling is the art of setting the hook. Successful businesses are those who learn how to effectively engage both of these important disciplines. If your marketing doesn’t fill your sales pipeline with prospective customers, it doesn’t matter how good your sales skills are. You need good quality prospects generated from your marketing activities to give your salespeople the opportunity to sell.

WHY MARKET?

You may have created the most amazing product or service; however, if nobody knows about it, you won’t have the opportunity to sell it! Your marketing lets people know you are in business! Marketing also keeps you in touch with your former customers, colleagues and business conduits. (Conduits are people you’ve developed a business relationship with, but do not necessarily buy your product;
however they are affiliated with those who could. A landscape architect would be an example of a “conduit” for people in the Green Industry).

WHEN TO MARKET?
Always! Good times and bad.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MARKETING?
Marketing’s main purpose is to get your cash register ringing on a consistent basis. When marketing is executed effectively, your company will retain its good customers and you will experience a steady flow of new prospective clients.

Keep your Sales Pipeline Flowing.
If the spotlight of your business is focused on landscape renovation, repair or new construction, you are constantly seeking new clients. Therefore, your marketing efforts must attract the attention of new prospects. A well-crafted marketing plan will help you keep your sales pipeline full.

Customer Retention. It is far more expensive to seek out new customers than it is to keep the ones you’ve already landed. Hence, great marketers understand the importance of regularly staying in touch with their existing clients. How often are you making contact with your current or past clients? A well-designed marketing plan will keep you in touch with your important network contacts.

Customer Loyalty. Your loyal customers are your most valuable marketing assets. Treat them as they deserve to be treated; like royalty! Talk to them frequently. Thank them for their business. You cannot thank them enough! Surprise them with a small token of your appreciation. A very small amount of marketing to your loyal followers will pay you large dividends.

WHAT’S IT GOING TO TAKE?
There are a few essential ingredients necessary for your marketing to work. First of all, you will need a marketplace with an adequate number of ideal prospects hungry for your services. Without an adequate number of prospects, any marketing you do will be irrelevant. Before you invest your time and money in marketing, be sure there is a market for your services.

If there is a market hungry for your services, what will you say to them? Effective marketing means having a meaningful message to communicate to your prospective clients.
Finally, you must decide what **media** you will employ to communicate your message to your prospective or existing customers. How will you deliver your marketing message? Will you use traditional outbound marketing methods like direct mail, print ads, home shows or door hangers? Or will you focus your business development efforts on Internet/inbound/social media marketing? We will discuss the many options available and concentrate mainly on media that presents little or no cost to your business.

**DO YOU HAVE THE CAPACITY?**

A word of warning; good marketing works! In fact, it can work so well that you may not have the capacity to perform the work it generates. This is a good problem to have, especially in a poor economy. However, if your marketing works to the point where you cannot keep up with the workload, you will begin to disappoint customers, and that can quickly backfire on you.

Be sure your company has the physical capacity to perform the work your marketing plan generates!

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**Chapter 2 - The Marketing Process**

Having been a student and practitioner of several marketing processes over the past 30 years, I have come to believe that a simple, yet succinct process is all that is necessary for marketing to be effective. The **Marketing Process** consists of four key components:

- **Preparation.** Preparation includes doing market research, understanding the challenges faced by marketers and making the mental commitment to marketing.

- **Marketing Plan.** Creating a functional marketing plan consists of setting goals, establishing strategies and implementing tactics.

- **Implementing Tactics.** Tactics are the action items of your plan. We’ll discuss outbound (traditional) marketing tactics, as well as inbound (Internet) tactics.

- **Measurement.** The final phase of the marketing process is to track, measure and evaluate the effectiveness of your plan.
Chapter 3 – Preparation

What preparation is necessary for you to keep a steady flow of qualified leads in your sales pipeline while maintaining contact with your network? What do you need to know and what will you need to do to prepare yourself and your company for the effort it will take to create and implement a successful marketing plan? Preparation includes making the mental commitment to marketing, understanding the challenges of marketing and researching your specific market.

Mental Preparation

Preparing yourself mentally is an all-important component of creating and implementing a successful marketing plan. Mac Bledsoe, founder of Parenting with Dignity, suggests that “the ideas that occupy your mind will rule your world.” As it relates to children, Bledsoe believes that the ideas that fill your child’s mind will cause them to behave accordingly. If their minds are filled with sex, drugs and rock ‘n roll...those thoughts will rule their world and their behavior. As parents, he believes it’s our responsibility to instill wholesome ideas that will help steer our kids down a prudent path of positive experiences.

In marketing, the same principle holds true. The ideas about marketing that occupy your mind will rule your marketing world. If you haven’t put much thought into marketing, or what marketing is capable of doing for your company, chances are you’ve done little to put marketing to work for you. By filling your mind with marketing ideas, you will have begun preparing for the rewards marketing can offer.

Challenges of Marketing

Implementing a marketing plan will not guarantee your business will succeed. The ante for most businesses these days is a decent product backed up by reasonably good service. Over the long haul, great marketing will not compensate for flawed products or services. Marketing alone cannot guarantee a steady flow of new prospects or help you keep your existing customers from defecting.
One of the main reasons marketing fails stems from a lack of understanding of the fundamentals of marketing by the principals of the business, or those responsible for business development. Businessmen and women who do not understand marketing will typically fail to invest time in developing a marketing plan. Without a plan, the business will generally have little idea about the current conditions of the market in which they compete. There will be little understanding of what to say to the market. And choosing the media in which to market the business is likely to be random, inconsistent and without a realistic budget.

Also, when marketers allow success to influence ego, and allow ego to rule their decisions, marketing typically becomes company centric rather than customer centric. Success tends to breed arrogance, and arrogance will ultimately disengage the company from its customer. The most successful marketers are those who regularly put themselves into their prospective customer’s shoes and look at the product or service from their perspective.

**WHY MARKETING FAILS**

**No Plan.** If you do not have a marketing plan, you will have no marketing goals. You have no roadmap to help guide you to profitability. Your marketing plan, if you had one, would include strategy – the all-encompassing objectives of the plan. It will also include tactics – individual activities that help contribute to achieving the objectives of the plan. Your marketing plan and your income statement (P&L Statement) are the roadmap that point to whether or not your company is heading north toward profitability...or sinking south into the tar pits of extinction. **Solution:** Create a marketing plan.

**Zero GPM** (*Great Prospects per Month). When marketing misses its mark and doesn’t produce profitable prospects, business owners get frustrated and will often abandon their misguided marketing methods. When marketing ceases to happen or is ineffective, the sales pipeline begins coughing up dry dust.

**Did Not KIT** (*Keep In Touch). I’ve asked contractors where they generate most of their business. The overwhelming response is “from my referral network.” I’ve heard that 70% or more of the business that contractors get comes from their referral network. Yet when I ask them if they have a strategy and tactics in place to keep in touch with their referral network, I often get back a glazed, puzzled look.

**Dark Shadows of Doubt.** Another challenge of marketing that lurks in the dark shadows is you! Frequently, I hear contractors tell me they’ve “tried marketing in the past...but it didn’t work.” Or, “Marketing is a waste of time and money.” And, “Marketing costs too much and doesn’t produce the results I want.” If you are not
convinced that you and/or your company will benefit from marketing, then most likely you too are cloaked in that Dark Shadow of Doubt.

**Daily Dust Cloud of Activity.** Another obstacle to successful marketing is the daily dust cloud of activity that consumes you. Too many things to do each day. Not enough time. Consequently the dust cloud of activity keeps you from investing time to market your business.

**Your Marketing Attracts the Wrong Customer.** The phone is ringing! It appears your marketing is working. Having prospects hungry for your services is the first criteria for marketing success. However, your prospects must be **profitable** as well. Your marketing must attract **profitable prospects.** The wrong customer may keep you busy, but you are in business to make a profit. **Solution:** Spend some time really identifying the characteristics of your ideal customer.

**No Measurement.** You currently invest in marketing activities, but never measure their effectiveness. Outside of your gut feeling, you have no idea whether or not your marketing makes sense, or makes your company any money. If you do not measure the results of your marketing efforts, your future planning will simply be a gut feeling rather than a planned event. **Solution:** For every marketing tactic you employ, make sure you have a mechanism to measure its performance.

**You Use Low Price to Attract New Business.** To kick start cash flow, you offer a “limited time sale” on your services. This attracts the pure price buyer and helps to further reduce your gross margin dollars. It does nothing to attract the attention of loyal customers. In fact, it only angers your loyal ones when they see you are offering a brand new customer a better deal than what they got when they bought from you! **Solution:** Do not use price to attract attention.
**Poorly Designed Website.** Rather than invest in the services of a professional website developer, you hired an inexperienced person to create your website. Worse yet, you don’t have a website! We are in the digital age and consumers will shop your services via the Internet. If you have little or no Internet exposure, you are lagging well behind your competitors who do. **Solution:** Invest in a customer centric website now.

**No Call to Action.** Your marketing doesn’t tell the prospect what to do. You simply state what a great company you have, throw in a few benefits, a couple of pats on the back, and a testimonial or two—but fail to include a call to action! Your marketing must ask the prospect to take action. **Solution:** Ask your prospects to take the next step into the buying cycle.

**Poor Service.** Your marketing worked! You even sold the prospect. However, the customer experience was less than desirable. Your company dropped the service ball and failed to create a memorable experience for the customer. The service encounters your customer receives will determine: (a) whether or not they buy from you; (b) whether or not they’d ever buy from you again; (c) whether or not they will tell others about the experience they had with you. Bottom line: it’s critical that your company provides an amazing experience each time they encounter the customer. **Solution:** Spend some time discovering what exceptional customer service is to your customers and prospects, then train everyone on staff to do what will meet or exceed the customer’s expectations.

**No Follow-Up Process.** You have no process for following up with inquiries; no system for following up after the job is complete; and no system for following up in the months or years to come. Poor follow-up jeopardizes the relationship with one of your most valuable assets: your happy customers. Out of sight becomes out of mind. You do not want to lose the mindshare you may have built up over the years with your past and current clients. **Solution:** Regularly keep in touch with your past and current customers, business associates and conduits.

**No Help.** You don’t have anybody to help you with your marketing; you don’t have someone to hold you accountable for your marketing efforts; no one to motivate you to take action; no one to help you measure your marketing results! **Solution:** Hire someone to help you.

**You Stopped Marketing.** When times were good, you quit marketing. You did not see the sense in wasting your money on marketing activities when there was a steady flow of inbound phone calls asking for your services. Now the phone isn’t ringing, and you don’t know how to get it to start back up. **Solution:** Never stop marketing.
Violated the Law of 7. Typically it will take at least 5 to 7 exposures to your marketing message before prospective clients even begin to take notice. Often, impatient marketers will pull their marketing activities long before they’ve had a chance for them to be absorbed by the prospective customer. Solution: Once you’ve chosen your marketing tactics, give them a chance to work. Be patient or don’t make the investment.

RESEARCHING YOUR MARKET

Is there a market for what you do? Before you immerse yourself deeply into the marketing process, it is prudent to research the market in which you have chosen to serve. For any business to be successful there must be an adequate number of “profitable customers” that have a desire or need for the products or services you offer.

Start by clearly identifying your ideal customer. My definition of the ideal customer is one who has a desire or need for my products or services and is willing to pay my price so I can make a profit! There are many “suspects” in any given marketplace that show a desire or need for your services; however, if they are unwilling to pay you enough to allow you to make a profit they do not qualify as ideal customers. Steer clear of resource-sucking “suspects” and focus your marketing efforts solely on genuine prospects.

When determining who your ideal customer is, don’t just use age, gender, income, housing value or other demographic information as the sole determining factors to determine your ideal customer. A much better approach is to ask questions, such as:

- Who is our ideal customer? (Demographics/Geographics)
- What’s important to that customer?
- What problem(s) does the customer experience?
- Why does my customer buy our services? What does our service do for the customer?
- How does our service address the problems/needs/desires of our ideal customer?
- What does the ideal customer NOT know? (Latent need)
- Where do they hang out? (Facebook, blogs, Google+™, Starbucks®…)
- How can we best reach our ideal customers?
Once you’ve answered these questions, the next question to ask is, “Are there enough of these customers in our marketplace to make our business profitable?” The answers to these questions will help you define your ideal customer and help you draft your marketing message.

**An Ideal Customer for Landscape Companies Specializing in Sustainability**

If you are in the business of creating or maintaining sustainable landscapes, a viable prospect you may consider marketing to is the Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS). These folks consist of approximately 30% of the US consumer base—a $300 billion market segment!

What do the LOHAS value? Healthy living. A Green lifestyle. They value sustainability and value over low price. Quality over quantity. They seek companies with attentive customer service. They value companies who employ experienced and knowledgeable people. The LOHAS consumer buys products and services that are compatible with their health-oriented, sustainable lifestyles.

To succeed with the LOHAS, you must have a good deal of credibility. You must value what the LOHAS values, and must be able to articulate your values in a likable, honest and trustworthy manner.

These folks are willing to spend money on things that help improve their environment and their lifestyle, landscapes included.

Ultimately, your ideal customers are your most profitable customers and the ones who advocate your business to others. These are the folks who will help your business achieve its goals. Interview those who have previously bought from you. Ask them why they bought from you. Discover what was important to them. Ask them what problems/desires your company satisfied. Ask them why they chose your company. Ask them how they found you in the first place. If they found you via a search engine, what keywords or phrases did they use to find you? All of this information is very valuable as you begin to craft your marketing plan.
The Four Quadrants of Consumer Profitability

Whenever a prospective customer contacts you, whether they’ve found you on the Internet, saw your truck at the neighbor’s house or responded to one of your marketing tactics, it is prudent to rate the profitability potential of the prospect by asking them a few simple questions.

The answers to these questions should give you a decent idea whether or not the caller is a genuine prospect, or a resource-sucking suspect.

### Quadrants of Profitability

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- **How did you find us?** (Lead source)
- **What prompted you to call?** (Buying motive)
- **Why is that important to you?** (Problem/Desire)
- **What are you interested in?** (Scope of work)
- **What’s your timeline for completing the project?** (Schedule)
- **Besides us, what other options are you considering?** (Competition)
- **What are the specific requirements/qualifications of the contractor you hire?** (Expectations)
- **What’s your budget for the project?** (Budget)

**Quadrant 1** Customers (actually these folks are “suspects”) in Quadrant 1 are neither hungry for your services, nor profitable. Suspects are truly not your ideal customer. They will not be calling you.

**Quadrant 2** represents the resource-sucking suspect who may be hungry for your services; however, they are not willing to pay you enough to generate profitable revenue. This is why you must ask the budget question. Is the caller willing to pay your price? If not, avoid these suspects and refer them to someone else.

**Quadrant 3** represents those prospects who would be profitable if you can convince them they want or need your services. Marketing plays an important role in moving Q3 prospects to Q4 customers. Keeping in touch with these folks makes good marketing sense.

**Quadrant 4** represents consumers that are in the market now. They are profitable and hungry for your services. They are at the top of the consumer profitability food chain. You want these consumers! But will they choose your company? That will largely depend on how well your marketing works. Will it be successful at attracting the Q4’s attention?
Market Trends. What’s happening in the marketplace? It is prudent to keep a close eye on market conditions, as well as physical and economic conditions and any changes that may be occurring. If drought dries up the water supply in your region, forging ahead with a marketing plan focusing on increasing the rotor installation segment of your business will most likely prove disastrous. Is discretionary income increasing or decreasing in your market? Is consumer confidence rebounding, or are shoppers still holding back their home improvement money?

What about other companies that compete in your marketplace? What are they doing to market their business? How do you compare what you have to offer, versus what your competitors are offering? Why should a consumer buy from you rather than your competitor?

Your Database. One of the most important assets your company owns is its customer and prospect database. You have a list of customers and prospects, don’t you? This is an essential component of your marketing effort. You must have your contacts in your database!

A key component of any effective marketing campaign includes regular updates to your database. Your database refresh should include your business associates, conduits, and all of those who didn’t buy from you initially. Things change. Staying in touch with those who initially said “no” to your proposal may pay off when their current service provider drops the proverbial ball.

Chapter 4 – The Marketing Plan: Goals, Strategy, and Tactics

Through your preparation, you’ve discovered there’s a market hungry for your services and there are enough ideal prospects to make your business profitable. With these two prerequisites satisfied, the next step is to begin crafting your marketing plan.
Creating your marketing plan will mean establishing **goals**, identifying **strategy** and then choosing the **tactics** that will allow your company to execute the strategy and thus accomplish its goals. Using a military analogy of goal/strategy/tactics, the **goal** of a military action is to “win the war.” The **strategy** might be to divide and conquer. The **tactics** might be to bring in tanks from the south, initiate air strikes from the north, or send offshore missiles from the west.

**GOALS**

Make sure your Goals are **SMART:** Specific. Measurable. Action-Oriented. Realistic. Time bound.

**Specific.** Your marketing goals represent the “finish line” and equate specifically to what you want the plan to accomplish. Are you looking to keep your sales pipeline filled with 10 ideal prospects each month? Are you seeking to stay in touch with your past customers and everyone in your networking database? Is your goal to increase profits by five percent? Add five new customers each quarter? Add a new market segment in 2013? Invest time to seriously think about what you want your marketing plan to do for your business. Then write the goals down.

**Measurable.** Whatever your goals may be, make sure they are easily measured. Adding five new maintenance accounts each quarter is easily measured. Review and evaluate the progress toward each goal on a regular basis.

**Action-Oriented.** Once your goals are established, determine what actions (strategy and tactics) you must take in order to achieve the goals.

**Realistic.** Would doubling sales next year be realistic? If your business is only a year old, perhaps this could be a realistic goal. However, setting a goal to take your company from $1 million to $2 million in annual sales will require a whole lot more than just a great marketing plan. Be realistic!

**Time bound.** Establish a completion date for achievement of your goals. Create a calendar of activities and include benchmarks and periodic progress reports.
Every business needs customers to survive, so an effective marketing strategy is critical for the long-term success of your business. **Strategy** can be defined as the framework supporting your company’s goals. It’s a plan of action designed to achieve the end results.

The two significant **marketing strategies** I believe worthy of serious consideration are the following:

1. **Lead Generation Strategy.** Creating a steady stream of new leads for your sales staff.
2. **Keeping In Touch (KIT) Strategy.** Many contractors say that most of their business is generated from their referral network, so it makes sense to keep in touch with all contacts.

**TACTICS**

Marketing tactics are the **actions and activities** required to execute the strategy. In Chapter 6, we will explore several marketing tactics your business could utilize in its marketing efforts. The **big question** is, what tactics make the most sense for your business? The answer to that question begins by looking at your goals and strategy.

**Traditional Marketing Goal:**

The objective of our marketing plan is to achieve a sales goal of $1.25 million in 2013 with a NPBT profit margin of 8% by filling our sales lead pipeline with 10+ qualified leads each month, and by keeping in close contact with our network using the strategy and tactics outlined within this plan.

**Specific:** Details spelled out in written plan  
**Measureable:** $1,250,000 in sales at 8% NPBT. 10+ leads per month.  
**Action Oriented:** Implementing the tactics defined within the plan.  
**Realistic:** Make sure the goal is realistic; tripling your business overnight is probably not realistic.  
**Time Bound:** One year

**Note:** *Don’t get caught in the trap of identifying your marketing goals as defined simply by the number of hits you get on your website or the number of leads generated by your direct mail piece. While these are important and will help fill your sales pipeline, they are not the ultimate goal. It is far more compelling to attach a profit number as THE goal.*
Chapter 5 – Your Marketing Message

Before selecting your marketing tactics, it is prudent to invest time in determining what you will say to them. In other words, what message do you want to send to your future prospects and your existing network? Will your marketing message appeal to your prospective customer’s desires and/or problems, and to that which is important to them? Will it motivate them to contact your company?

The answer to these questions lies within your promise statement. When crafting a meaningful marketing message, start by fully understanding what’s important to your ideal customer. Then make a promise to satisfy their concerns.

WHAT’S YOUR PROMISE?

Check your mission statement at the coat rack. Why should customers care about your value proposition? What really matters is your promise! Customers really don’t give two hoots about your company’s mission. They really don’t spend much time thinking about your value proposition. However, they will pay close attention to what you promise them.

A promise to perform is far more meaningful to the prospective customer than what you may think the mission of your company might be. And, if you’ve made good on your promises to past clients, your referral network will be rock solid. Your marketing message could simply be your promise to perform.

Sample Promise Statements:
At (your company name here), we promise to serve our customers with care and compassion.
We promise to enrich your outdoor experience by offering you a likable staff of experienced craftsmen who are trustworthy and quality minded.
We promise to conduct ourselves in a professional and efficient manner.
We promise to employ skilled craftsmen and continue to educate them throughout their career.
We promise to complete all work on time and on budget.
We promise to call you back promptly and take care of any issues immediately.
We promise to clean up after our work each day.
We promise to…you get the idea!

If we fail to make good on any of these promises...here’s what we’ll do for you....
To begin developing your promise statement, answer the following questions. The answers will provide you with the foundation of your marketing message. The answers will be the reasons why future prospects will consider buying from you, and why your network will recommend you and refer business to your company. The answers will give you an indication as to why your company is different from others competing for the same clients:

- What was it that led you to choose our company over the others?
- What problems/issues did we solve for you?
- What were the important criteria you used to decide who to buy from?
- What did you like, or not like, about the others submitting proposals?
- Did we make good on our promises? How so? If not, where did we fall short?

It pays dividends to identify what is important to those who buy from you. A simple survey of past clients may also show you what you need to promise future clients. Here is a list of possibilities:

**What single attribute about your company is most important to your customers?**

- Technical proficiency?
- Experience?
- Price?
- Impeccable communication?
- Sustainability?
- On time and on budget?
- Committed to complete customer care?
- Staffed with polite office and field personnel?
- Quick to respond to issues?
- Providing the best overall value?
- Fulfilling its promises?
Chapter 6 –
An Overview of Marketing Tactics

You’ve established your marketing goals. You’ve settled upon your strategy. You’ve identified a hungry market. You’ve crafted your marketing message. Now you must select the media and marketing tactics in which you will communicate your message to your target audience. In today’s marketplace, marketing tactics can be categorized as either outbound (traditional) or inbound (Internet-based) marketing.

OUTBOUND MARKETING

As the name suggests, outbound marketing relies on tactics that reach out to an audience with the sender’s message, hoping to grab a prospect’s attention long enough to capture interest. Outbound marketing (commonly referred to as interruption marketing because it frequently interrupts what we are doing in order to grab our attention) includes tactics like direct mail, print advertisements in newspapers and magazines, cold calling, telemarketing, media buys on television and radio, billboards, trade shows and other means of attempting to grab the attention of prospective clients.

Because the recipient of outbound marketing tactics typically did not ask for the interruption, these tactics are often very non-productive. I’ve got caller ID on my phone, TiVo on my television, spam filters on my computer and my wastebasket is littered with stacks of direct mail pieces that didn’t make the cut. Consumers have become extremely efficient at filtering out the marketing noise that holds no interest to them. Consequently, millions of dollars are wasted each day by outbound marketers hoping to grab your attention.

In order for outbound tactics to work, they must find prospects that are in the market right now. Hence timing is vitally important when utilizing outbound methods to generate sales opportunities. The right message must hit the right prospect at exactly the right time! Like a visit to Vegas, the odds of instantly hitting the outbound...
marketing jackpot are remote. Typical response rates generated from outbound marketing are a lowly 1-4 percent.

Also, the cost per lead for outbound marketing is said to be much higher—averaging $373 per lead—whereas the cost per lead for inbound tactics runs approximately $143. This wide gap is drawing more and more marketers to the Internet. (Source: DMG Advertising.)

**What’s it take to succeed with outbound marketing tactics?**

1. **A laser focused prospect list.** Your ideal customer must be hungry for what you offer.
2. **A compelling message** that will capture the interest of your ideal customer.
3. **You must repeat the message frequently** and through media accessed by your ideal customer.
4. **Good timing.** Your message must reach the ideal customer when they are ready to enter the buying cycle.

**INBOUND MARKETING**

Inbound marketing is Internet based and offers a host of relatively new marketing tactics centered on the Internet. Inbound marketing is about using tactics that help your company **get found** by customers who are currently in the market for the products or services you offer. It involves creating and providing information that your ideal customer will find valuable.

Inbound marketing tactics focus on gaining the attention of prospective customers by exposing your company to the marketplace via social media. It’s about creating content rich web pages, informative blogs, having a Facebook presence, Tweeting on a regular basis, or posting YouTube™ videos. Inbound tactics might include subscribing to and posting on Pinterest™, creating an educational email newsletter and connecting with your LinkedIn™ network.

**Outbound vs. Inbound**

According to David Meerman Scott, author of *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*, the major difference between inbound and outbound marketing is that outbound tactics attempt to “buy, beg or bug their way in” via paid marketing methods that often interrupt the consumer with an unwanted message, whereas inbound tactics are designed to earn customer interest by providing valuable information the consumer is seeking when they are ready to purchase.

How do you shop for goods and services? Do you look in the Yellow Pages®? Do you peruse the Sunday want ads? Do you see a billboard and immediately dash to the vendor’s store to buy the product featured? When was the last time you answered
a telemarketing call and bought the pitch? How often have you opened up a direct mail piece from a company you were unfamiliar with and made a purchasing decision? When was the last time you saw an ad on TV or heard one on the radio and bought the product?

If you are like most shoppers, you are rarely (if ever) motivated to make a purchase based on any of these outbound marketing methods. Consumers rarely respond to this form of marketing, because at the time they see or hear the advertisement, they are most likely not ready to buy. Hence the marketing tactic produces little in the way of immediate results.

Statistically, one infographic has shown that 86 percent of viewers skip TV commercials and 44 percent of recipients never open their direct mail pieces. In contrast, companies that post blogs have 50 percent more website visitors than those that don’t. According to DMG Advertising, inbound marketing leads cost 60 percent less on average than traditional outbound methods.

The Internet has changed the way consumers shop for goods and services. Google™ search, Yahoo!™ and Bing™ are top search engines that help consumers quickly locate information, people, businesses, products and services. These search engines have virtually made obsolete printed Yellow Page directories, one of the classic forms of outbound marketing.

Inbound marketing is about creating a relationship with customers and prospects. Rather than reaching out to find customers in the traditional manner, inbound marketing is about the customer finding you. Now we’re talking! When customers are ready to buy, they seek you out. Of course, this typically won’t happen overnight, and it will only happen if your company has an online presence. The keys to success using inbound tactics are to first create an Internet presence, and then consistently provide content rich information.

An Internet presence comes in many forms. The most common web-based media include personal and company websites, blogs, Facebook™, Twitter™, Pinterest, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google+, Tumblr™, and Flikr™ to name just a few of the growing list of inbound tools.

But how will the prospect find you online in the first place? Your website, blog and Facebook pages are all filled with great content, and yet nobody is clicking. That’s the initial challenge of all inbound marketing strategies. We’ll discuss the answer to this question in upcoming chapters.
Inbound marketing also reflects changes in the customer buying cycle. Whereas customers used to engage vendors and sales people early in the buying cycle to learn about features and benefits, today’s consumer is now conducting extensive online research prior to contacting vendors. By the time the customer calls you, they have a very good idea as to what they are looking for. Because of this, your online media must provide the information consumers are looking for if your company is to be considered in the running for their business. A weak website will certainly turn off the more sophisticated shopper.

Now, the big question becomes: Which marketing tactics will provide you with the best bang for your marketing buck? Although the social media moguls want you to focus your attention entirely on Internet/social media/inbound marketing, I believe there is a symbiotic relationship between inbound and outbound marketing and they work best when they work together. We’ll now look at specific outbound and inbound marketing tactics.

Chapter 7 – Outbound Marketing Tactics

Over the past 20 years, I’ve conducted hundreds of business workshops for thousands of contractors throughout the United States. During each seminar, I ask every audience where they derive the majority of their work. Unanimously, the audience agrees that the majority of their work comes from their referral network. With that being said, Keeping In Touch (KIT) with your network is critical to the success of your marketing plan.

If your company becomes “out-of-sight,” it can quickly become “out-of-mind.” To avoid this condition, you should regularly schedule tactics that help keep you in touch with your network of contacts. We will now explore outbound tactics that will keep you in front of your network and future customers.

DIRECT MAIL

Direct mail can be an effective marketing tool, especially when sent to people who already know you. Your past customers, current clients and your network of business and personal associates will respond more favorably when they receive a mail piece coming from a known source, as opposed to receiving an unsolicited piece of mail from an unknown entity.
Of course, the prerequisite to an effective direct mail campaign is having a good, clean, fresh database of contact information. Your marketing database could be as simple as a Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheet or the more robust information stored in your Microsoft® Outlook® contact management files. However, you will need to keep an up-to-date database if your direct mail is to be effective.

**DIRECT MAIL IDEA BANK:**

**Send a Thank You Card.** Who doesn’t appreciate a thank you note? Send one immediately following your first meeting with a potential client. Send one upon closing a deal, and by all means, send a thank you upon completion of job. You cannot say “thank you” enough!

**Send an Anniversary Card.** A year after you’ve completed a project or started doing maintenance, send your customer an anniversary card acknowledging it’s been a year since the work was performed. And thank them again.

**Send a Special Occasion Card.** Every September, I receive a birthday card from Southwest Airlines®. They don’t need to do that, however, it just strengthens my loyalty to them. Send a holiday card, Happy New Year card or “It’s time to revive your landscape” card. This form of outbound marketing is inexpensive and does not require much time, yet it can have a very positive effect.

**Send a personalized letter and include a photo of a recently completed project.** Or, send your good customers a photo/job of the month idea. Keep in front of your past clients by sharing with them photos of your latest work.

Send an announcement and ask people to visit you online:
- Visit our newly updated website
- Take a peek at our new Facebook page
- Enjoy our blog
- Can we have permission to send you our informative eNewsletter?
- Check out our Pinterest boards

Send an Invitation:
- Join us for our Evening Under the Stars
- Visit us at our booth at the Home Show
- Attend our upcoming Garden Tour
- Register for our Sustainable Gardening Seminar

Send a mini portfolio to a targeted list of architects, builders, real estate agents or other contractors.
PERMISSION EMAIL

Email marketing is an easy and inexpensive way to reach out to your existing customers and contacts, provided you captured their email addresses. When email is sent from you to a recipient, it is considered an outbound tactic. For best results, ask your contacts for permission to send them valuable email correspondence.

Email serves as an efficient method of communicating announcements, upcoming events and invitations. If you have gained permission from your clients to send them emails, don’t overdo it and do not send sales pitches. Use this tactic to educate and entertain. The fundamental rule of thumb when considering an email marketing campaign is the information must be compelling, interesting, relevant, up-to-date and enjoyable to read.

What’s it going to take? What’s it take to create an effective email marketing campaign? First of all, it requires a database of email addresses. If you’ve collected your customers’ email addresses, the first hurdle has been cleared! On the Contact Us page of your website, you can gather all the info you need from your customers and prospects. Make sure you ask them for their email address, and ask them for permission to email them! Give them the option to opt out of receiving email if they choose.

Next, it requires good content. The number one criteria for email marketing is that you must have good content and/or a good reason for the recipient to read your email messages. If you send “spam-like” sales pitches, your email campaigns will fail and your credibility will suffer. Do not waste your customer’s or prospect’s time with poorly written email newsletters, annoying sales pitches, or spam! What does work is valuable information that helps your reader gain new insights, educates, inspires or entertains them.

EMAIL RULES AND REGULATIONS

Your email campaigns must comply with the federal CAN-SPAM Act of 2003. In general, the law does not require that you get permission before emailing recipients; however, commercially sent emails must adhere to three types of compliance:

1. Recipients must be able to easily unsubscribe to the emails, and must be removed from the list within 10 days of an unsubscribe notification.
2. Content must be compliant, meaning that the email must contain an accurate “from” line; it must contain a relevant “subject” line and it must contain a physical address of the publisher.
3. Messages cannot be sent through an open relay, a harvested list and cannot contain a false header.
There are no restrictions against companies emailing its existing customers or anyone who has inquired about its products or services. If your customers choose to opt out, that’s ok. However, by asking them for permission in the first place, you will find most of the recipients will be agreeable to at least give your emails a look.

Email Services and Resources:

AceofSales.com – Jeffrey Gitomer’s email marketing system to help you open doors and close sales
ConstantContact.com – Email marketing specialists
iContact.com – Email marketing specialists
DigitalMarketer.com – Quick and dirty tips for building your business with web tools
CopyBlogger.com – Content builder for email and online marketing
Hubspot.com – All-in-one marketing software
MailChimp.com – Design, send and track emails

PERSONAL TOUCH

Another highly effective marketing tactic is to pay a personal visit to your clients and influencers. I do believe that Facebook has its place as a modern day marketing tool; however, I firmly believe that one of the most potent marketing tactics available to all marketers is to get face-to-face at least once a quarter with your key connections.

To keep from being an unwanted interruption, call in advance and let your client know that you will be in the neighborhood. “Would it be ok if I stopped by for a couple of minutes?” For me, face-to-face contact trumps Facebook contact most every time.

NETWORKING

Networking in today’s marketplace could be classified as either business or social. Business networking is the act of getting together either face-to-face or via online media with like-minded people for the purpose of expanding your market reach.

Tune into your Target’s Preferences

Many business networkers prefer face-to-face networking over online methods because the potential for developing richer relationships with constituents is much greater. Personally, I much prefer meeting clients face-to-face than exchanging text or email messages. I believe that when you cast your net in person, your market reach becomes much broader. I favor networking as one of the primary outbound marketing tactics.

I would encourage you to join a trade association and become active. By active, I mean attend the meetings and meet fellow members. I learned long ago that what you get out of the relationships you develop in a trade association via networking is
proportional to what you first put into it. The more you participate and contribute, the greater your return. Do not expect much from any association if all you do is send in your dues.

Consider joining Business Network International (BNI), the world’s largest business networking and referral marketing association in the world. The catch is that this association accepts only one person from each professional category. If the chapter nearest you already has a Green Industry professional, you may be out of luck. On the other hand, if you are the only landscape contractor applying, you will have access to a number of like-minded people eager to refer you to their network.

Outside of associations, also consider networking with other professionals that service your market. Find out who’s doing pest control, pool maintenance, electrical work, masonry or exterior painting in the markets you serve. Get together with the principals of these companies and develop your own referral network.

Social Media Networking. Although I have touted the value of face-to-face networking, in this day and age with the reach of social networks and the convenience they offer to professionals juggling businesses, families, and kids’ soccer games, the online community has become a valuable networking tool—one that can be far more convenient and far-reaching than face-to-face contact.

For those who prefer the convenience of networking digitally, online communication offers the advantage of being able to communicate or contribute to an online dialogue on a timeline that fits one’s personal schedule. Participating in online forums and discussion boards can be productive in finding like-minded peers or prospects, as well.

Face-to-face and digital networking do not have to be mutually exclusive concepts, and can complement each other rather well. For example, most trade associations and business networking groups do maintain an online presence with some type of forum such as LinkedIn or a Facebook page offering you another opportunity to extend your reach.

KNUCKLING DOWN
As the name suggests, a “knuckling down” campaign consists of you or your designated lead generation staff approaching a neighborhood of prospective clients and knocking on their doors in an effort to drum up new leads. Many contractors, including me, got their start utilizing this approach. Although not glamorous by any stretch of the imagination, knuckling down (cold calling) can be highly effective because it gives you the opportunity to speak directly with potential customers. It also affords you the opportunity to survey the market to get a feel for the viability of your services.
You will instantly create awareness whenever your knock is answered. The key to succeeding with the knuckle approach is to:

1. Have the guts to do it in the first place.
2. Understand that your success rate may be very low.
3. Do it on a Saturday morning.
4. Wear appropriate clothing and a big smile on your face.
5. Prepare in advance what you are going to say, and what your desired result will be given the opportunity to chat it up with a prospect.
7. State your purpose.
8. Ask questions designed to reveal opportunity.
9. If there is a spark of interest, ask for an appointment.
10. If there is no interest, politely say goodbye.

**Knuckling Down Stories**

One Saturday morning around 11 a.m. in the middle of July 2011, the doorbell rings, causing my dog, Charlie, to bark loudly. Someone’s at the door. Since I study sales and marketing techniques, I answer the door. (“A potential lab rat,” I whisper to CharlieDog.) The tall man dressed in khakis and a long sleeved button-down Oxford shirt introduces himself as Jeremy. He represents Edward Jones Investment Company. He’s out this morning making people “aware” that he has recently opened up his office in the nearby strip center.

Sadly, Jeremy has not attended my Selling Skills class. He proceeds with the classic “sales dump” explaining the products and services his company offers. He never once asks me if I have any interest or need for what he is offering. He finishes his shtick, hands me his brochure and business card and bids me adieu. Jeremy misses a great opportunity. He did make me aware of whom he was by “knuckling down” that morning, however, he did not ask me any questions that might have led to an appointment.

Remember: marketing is the “bait” you use to attract prospect attention. Selling is the “hook” that rings the cash register. They go hand in hand. Jeremy’s knuckling down marketing efforts made me aware of who he was and what he had to offer; however, his effort fell short of the ultimate goal of marketing, which is to create opportunities to sell.
On a Saturday morning in December 2011, around 11 a.m., the doorbell rings once again. Charlie barks, letting me know we have another potential “lab rat” at our front door. (Why 11 a.m. on Saturday? Because prospects are most likely home at that time.) The first thing out of Robert’s mouth is “Please don’t throw me in the street. I’m not trying to sell anything.”

Perfect! It is another lab rat! I allowed Robert to proceed with his pitch. Unlike Jeremy, Robert must have studied the Binkelian Sales Process, because rather than dumping a sales pitch on me, Robert begins by asking me a series of questions regarding our home. More specifically, he asks when we last replaced our water heater. I think for a moment, and then respond, “Well, in the 17 years we’ve lived here, we’ve never replaced our water heater.”

Robert replies, “That’s terrific! Most water heaters will last about 8 to 12 years. Yours has definitely outperformed the norm.” With that, I instantly recall that my neighbor’s water heater recently broke down and flooded his house. Robert’s company specializes in solar water heater retrofits for homes like ours. He asks me if we’d be interested in setting up an appointment with one of his company’s field sales representatives. Robert’s marketing activity has worked! With a few simple questions, he exposed a latent need: a new water heater. He asked me for an appointment. We agreed to meet his salespeople on December 15 at 6 p.m.

Mark is a landscape contractor in Phoenix, AZ. Whenever his company does work in a given neighborhood, Mark will visit several of the homes immediately adjacent to the home under construction. He does this on the Saturday morning immediately following the commencement of work. He introduces himself as the Project Manager of the work being done at their neighbor’s home. He hands his “prospects” his business card and asks them to call him immediately if his company’s work causes too much noise, too much dust or any other inconvenience. He assures those he meets that any issues will be immediately remedied.

As he prepares to depart his goodwill mission, he concludes the visit by asking the neighbors if there are any landscape projects that his company could help them with. The cost of Mark’s marketing effort is only his time. The benefit is that he has created awareness of his company and goodwill with several potential future customers.

**Return on Investment:** Mark has landed several projects using this simple marketing technique.
Knuckling down is certainly not a glamorous marketing technique; however, with a creative approach and the right attitude, it can be highly effective with little to no cost. It is very difficult for a direct mail piece or even your website to build instant rapport and trust with prospective customers, whereas a personal visit by you can. Get your marketing to focus more on building strong relationships with prospective customers and less on the actual services you perform. After all, many customers typically buy you first, and then the work.

**EDUCATION AND EVENTS**

Events such as home shows, garden tours, an “Evening Under the Stars” or educational seminars can prove to be a highly effective marketing tactic. The upside is you will have the opportunity to become intimately exposed to a large number of prospects in a short period of time. The downside to hosting an event is the time and effort it takes to produce a good one.

**Educational Seminars and Demonstrations.** Educational seminars are an excellent way to keep in touch with your customers, as well as generate new leads for your business. However, producing and presenting a 2-to-4 hour workshop is a very arduous affair. If you choose to take this approach, you will have the opportunity to spend very valuable face time with all those who attend.

**Evening Under the Stars.** If you install outdoor lighting, invite your past customers and their friends to attend an evening lighting demonstration. Or if you install outdoor kitchens, why not host a “How to become a Grillmeister” demonstration at a newly-completed project. Teach the client and a dozen of his best buddies how to grill up the perfect ribeye!

**Garden Tours.** If one of your prized gardens is selected to participate in a Home Garden Tour, such as the annual Phoenix Home and Garden Grand Tour of Gardens, your company will become exposed to hundreds of prospective customers. The rub: big bucks to participate, and many “suspects” passing through.

**Home and Garden Shows.** Another lead generating tactic is to purchase a booth at a local Home and Garden Show. The benefit: lots of exposure. The rub: time consuming, expensive, and exhausting.

**Bay Cruise.** This tactic is expensive, yet can prove to be an excellent relationship building/maintaining event. Jon Ewing, owner of Landtrends, Inc. in San Diego,
(no relation to Ewing Irrigation) hosted an annual Christmas Bay Cruise Brunch each December. He invited his key conduits—landscape architects, builders, developers and his suppliers. During the 3-hour bay cruise, Jon would personally thank each guest for being an important part of his business. How do you think this made his guests feel? When one of Jon’s architect guests needed a contractor to bid on a project, you can bet that Landtrends was at the top of the bid list!

**WOW! VISUALS**

Business cards, brochures, project portfolios, door hangers, post cards, truck wraps, and jobsite signs are all examples of printed marketing materials. The cost of print has come down over the years; however, before you invest in print, make sure your images jump out and grab your potential customers’ attention.

**Full Body Wrap.** When I worked at FX Luminaire, we had our service vans and utility trucks fully wrapped. This process is much more costly than simply printing your company name, logo and website address on the side of your truck; however, it will create awareness for your company.

**Jobsite Signs.** An inexpensive awareness tool, jobsite signs should be placed before, during and after completion of a project. And if you happen to be a lighting contractor, I suggest you illuminate the sign at night. It will stand out far more prominently at night than it does during the daytime.

**Door Hangers.** Not nearly as personal as other marketing approaches, however door hangers do have the potential of creating awareness if properly designed. The secret to getting a response from a door hanger is all about visual impact of the piece and the offer you make. The visual must capture the viewer’s immediate attention. The offer must appeal to the prospect’s immediate desires or problems.

Do not fill a door hanger with a ton of bullet point reasons why the recipient should call you. Appeal to their emotions. Solve a problem. Titillate their ego. Enhance their outdoor experience. Typically, the response from door hangers is low, because it is a shotgun approach to marketing and most potential prospects are not in the market for your service when the door hanger is hung. However, the cost per door hanger is relatively inexpensive when bought in bulk quantity.

**Portfolio.** A project portfolio is the visual representation of your best work. It serves as your illustrative testimonial of the quality of work and craftsmanship your company is capable of providing its prospective clients. It’s your “proof of performance” document that will help you sell your work. This can be done online or in print.
Public Relations (PR) is defined as the practice of managing the flow of information between an individual or a company and the general public. PR can provide your company exposure to the marketplace at virtually no cost. PR can be in the form of written articles for newspapers, magazines, trade associations or online posting services. It can be news releases of recently earned awards, speaking engagements at conferences or sponsorships and charitable work. PR is also “expert” spots on TV or radio shows.

The goal of PR is to present your company in a favorable light to a targeted audience by providing information they will find engaging and newsworthy. For example, are you noticing a trend among landscape requests or issues in your area, or are you involved with a project of significant value to the community, such as a historic building, community gardens, etc.? It is not an advertisement for your company’s services. The key to a good PR Plan is to provide a “steady stream” of newsworthy information to your targeted media; however, it takes a commitment over the long haul for PR to pay dividends.

Print Advertisements

Print ads are some of the most common forms of outbound marketing. Examples include advertising in a Yellow Page directory, or a display ad in a magazine or local newspaper. Billboards would be considered print media. This form of marketing can be very expensive and produce frustratingly low results. As Guy Kawasaki said, “If you’ve got more money than brains…” invest in print advertising! However, if you’re marketing budget is limited, I suggest you steer clear of most print media.

There are always exceptions. A creative display ad in a localized newspaper may produce positive results. The key is to make sure your ad speaks to a particular need. Do not try to be all things in your ad. Steer clear of the temptation to have your print ad scream out: “We install sprinklers, pavers, decks and patios, water features, outdoor lighting, drainage, dog runs, and we do maintenance, too!”

You will get much better results if your ad focuses on one specialized service or appeals to the frustrations consumers have with contractors. Here’s a headline in an ad in my local newspaper under the landscaping/maintenance column: “We actually show up!” Every other ad said basically the same thing.

If the goal of your print advertisements is to get people to call you, the ad better have a headline and visuals that appeal to people’s problems or their emotions.
Hang out where your customers hang out!

Al, a wise old contractor from Burbank, Calif., specializes in estate and high-end residential landscape maintenance. Several years ago, he shared with me his very unique approach to marketing. Each morning, Al would park his eye-catching 1946 cherry red Ford pickup truck directly in front of the donut shop where he knew potential prospects frequented.

Once strategically parked, he would enter the shop, buy a cup of coffee, a cinnamon twist and pick up a copy of the newspaper. While Al was satisfying his need for artificial energy and catching up on the news, other patrons would be asking the baristas about the cool truck parked outside.

The baristas would point out Al as the owner of the vehicle. Frequently, patrons would comment on the truck telling Al, “That’s a really cool truck you’ve got there. You’ve taken excellent care of it over the years.”

Al would reply, “Thank you very much. But if you think the truck looks good, imagine what your landscape would look like if you hired my company to maintain it!” He’d then hand one of his business cards, complete with a picture of the truck, to the inquiring soul. Al told me he had never marketed in any other fashion once he found out the effectiveness of this marketing tactic! Hang out where your customers hang out. Be present and give them something to talk about.

Al’s bait: his visually pleasing pickup truck.

No Charge Sample Service

One of the best stories I’ve come across regarding entrepreneurial marketing comes from Don McLelland Jr. In the winter, Don does snow removal. One morning, he passed a residence that had a posted a sign in the front yard. The sign read “Wanted. Snow Removal Service.”

Don stopped his truck, pulled out one of his business cards and walked up to the front door. When he opened the screen door, 10 other “Snow Removal Service” Business cards fell to the ground. Don could have done the unscrupulous thing and simply replaced the 10 cards with his. Instead, he took the high road and proceeded to clear the drive and walks. When he finished, he wrote a small note and left it along with his contract amongst the other cards. It read, “Hi, I’m the
What can you do to generate interest? Offer a complimentary water audit. A complimentary irrigation inspection. Soil analysis. Offer a one-month “free trial” of your maintenance service. Get creative. People like to sample goods and services before committing.

Referral Rewards. A good friend of mine, Greg Gill, owns a heating and air conditioning business in San Marcos, Calif. Whenever a past or current client refers a prospect to him, Greg sends a thank you note to the referring party along with “Gill Bucks” equaling 10% of the new customer’s total purchase price if the prospect buys. Gill Bucks can be used by the referring party to purchase products or maintenance services. All HVAC systems need maintenance, so most of his clients use the Gill Bucks for that purpose.

Why 10%? Greg has allocated 10% of his sales price to marketing. If a client refers a new customer, there is really no marketing cost to his business, so he pays forward his marketing dollars to the referring party.

At the bare bones minimum, whenever someone refers a customer to you, send them a Thank You note! Better yet, send them a bottle of their favorite wine or a fruit basket or something that you know they would enjoy. After all, the cost of obtaining a referred sales lead is virtually zero. Set aside a portion of your marketing budget for “rewards.”
Chapter 8 – The Internet and Inbound Marketing

Internet marketing, social media marketing, inbound marketing and content marketing are terms that did not exist just a few short years ago. However, today this media has become a dominant player in how consumers buy goods and services, and how companies go to market. The Internet has empowered consumers allowing them to instantly access information on products and services they seek.

Think about how you shop for products and services. The vast majority of us head straight for our computer or smartphone to seek solutions to our consumer cravings. The traditional methods of marketing are not completely dead; however, the heartbeat of marketing is now found online. As David Meerman Scott says, “The rules of marketing have changed!”

We no longer rely on TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, direct mail, or other traditional channels of “outbound marketing” to learn about the products and services we are considering. Rather than deal with a pesky salesperson, consumers today go to Google™ search, type in a keyword or phrase, do some research, and then click “add to cart!”

The Internet is quickly becoming the dominant marketing vehicle for many companies because it provides the opportunity to reach customers who are ready to buy at an incredibly low cost.

and the social media revolution, your company was forced to buy expensive ads (Yellow Pages, magazine, newspaper, etc.), beg for public relations opportunities, or bug customers with salespeople in order to get the consumer to recognize your company. Today’s marketers are employing “inbound marketing” tactics to attract buyer attention.
Inbound Marketing. Synonymous with what Seth Godin calls “Permission Marketing”, inbound marketing is about posting information that consumers value on websites, social sites, blogs, eBooks, podcasts, video, and other Internet-based media. When the content of your posts is valued and well positioned throughout the Internet, the consumer finds you, rather than you spending large sums of money on outbound methods attempting to attract customers.

Inbound marketing is well suited to Green Industry services. Your prospective customers are looking online to help make their purchasing decisions. They are reading blogs. They are friending on Facebook. They are tracking Tweets. They look at YouTube videos. They are interested in your images on Pinterest. They are studying your website and the websites of your competitors. Consumers are finding what they want online. And they can find you, too, as long as you have an online presence that’s appealing to them.

Although the pace of change online is astonishing, I believe the “anchor tenant” of a sound inbound marketing strategy centers on your website. However, to help increase the likelihood that you will be found by consumers, you’ll need to post good content and become visible on other internet-based channels such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest and others. It means you must provide “online content” that your customers and prospects will find informative, entertaining and of value. We’ll cover content marketing in Chapter 10.

Social Media Marketing. Social media marketing is the process of driving traffic to your website by becoming active in social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+ and LinkedIn. Your presence and involvement with social media will help amplify the impact of your content and raise your position on Internet search engines. When you become active with social media, your content has the potential of being distributed across a wide range of social networks consisting of a vast number of interrelated personal relationships.

To become an effective social media marketer, you will need to generate compelling content on an ongoing basis. As David Meerman Scott suggests, “On the web, you are what you publish.” Without a content-based Internet presence, your company will become dependent on outdated marketing methods.

Major Benefits of Inbound Marketing: Less Cost, Better Leads!
Outbound marketing means opening up your wallet and spending money to buy advertisements, home show booth space or mailing lists for a direct mail campaigns. Inbound marketing means investing time creating and posting compelling content. A blog costs nothing to start. A Facebook page or Google+ account, a LinkedIn profile, a YouTube or Twitter account—all of these are free to create. All of these
Internet marketing media can draw a steady stream of prospects to your site at a very low cost.

And the best part is, those who are drawn to your online media are typically ready to buy, so the quality of the lead goes way up. They’re looking at your site because they are now part of that 7% of the buying community that is either seriously thinking about your services, or they are ready to make a purchase. Cost of lead...way down. Quality of lead...way up!

The key to an effective inbound marketing strategy is to maximize your online exposure with great content. That’s where the fun begins! How does one go about doing this so that their company has a good chance of gaining the attention of prospective clients?

**There are at least four critical elements necessary to succeed with online marketing.**

1. Start with an inbound marketing plan; identify your goals, strategy and tactics.
2. The tactics (website, Facebook page, blog, Pinterest, etc.) must be professional looking and user friendly.
3. They must be filled with **compelling content** that visitors will find useful, entertaining and visually stimulating and help you get found via Internet search engines.
4. There must be a **call for action**. Your website, blog or Facebook page should include a “Contact Us” page or some means for the visitor to make contact with you.

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**Chapter 9 - Your Website**

The Internet has redefined how businesses go to market and to keep pace with the rapidly evolving marketing landscape, your business must invest in the Internet and social media marketing, and that starts with your website.

If you do not have a website, get one **now**! If you do have one, make sure you’ve built a great website that engages viewers and helps turn prospects into customers. Your website is often the first contact a prospective customer will have with your company. They may have seen your web address on your truck, or have gotten your name from an organic search on Google. They may have gotten your web address from one of your past customers. Regardless of how the prospect found your website, it will most likely be their first impression, and we all know how important **first impressions** can be.
With that first click to your website, will the first impression be good, bland or bad? The quality of your website will say volumes to the viewer about the quality of the work you do. The viewer will immediately begin forming an opinion about your business. If you do not feel that you are capable of creating a quality website, hire a professional or company that specializes in creating quality websites. It will be well worth the investment!

**GOALS AND PURPOSE OF YOUR WEBSITE**

The purpose of your website is to convey your company’s brand, show off its professionalism and differentiate you from others competing in your marketplace. It should be designed to communicate your core message, explain that your company can solve the customer’s problems or satisfy their desires. It should also be designed to engage the visitor and ask them to step into your sales cycle.

The starting point for all websites is to define the purpose of the site: When building or evaluating your website, start by asking “What do we want the site to accomplish?” Do you want it to inform? Educate? Show off your work? In many cases, the websites for companies in the Green Industry are crafted as online company brochures. They show the viewer what services the company offers. They should attempt to establish the credibility of the company. And the site should have an easy way for viewers to inquire or request additional information about the services offered.

Another goal of your website should be to help you generate sales leads. If that is one of your site’s objectives, then you need to consider what actions your visitors must take in order to become a sale lead. Does your site have a Contact Us page? Is it easy to navigate? If someone does fill out your “contact us” box, who will retrieve the inbound request and how soon will the sender hear back from you? The worst-case scenario is that it takes your company a week to retrieve and respond to the request. As you will see later on, prompt follow up is one of the most critical marketing tactics every company needs to employ. You must incorporate a rapid response system if you are encouraging prospective customers to contact you.

**CREATING YOUR WEBSITE**

Next up...who’s going to build your website? You or an expert? Sites like Wordpress.com and GoDaddy.com have made basic web construction relatively easy for the beginner. However, unless you have a keen eye for graphic design, it will be worth your while to invest in a professional that specializes in custom web design.
Three key attributes for any website are:

1. Its visual presentation. The website must be pleasing to the eye. The graphics must look good and load fast. Good graphics will hold the attention of visitors and bring them back for more.
2. The content of your website must be useful to the visitor. Web surfers know what they are looking for, so your site must be able to quickly answer the questions that visitors have.
3. And your website must include keywords and phrases used by people who search for services like yours.

If you have the capacity to incorporate these critical attributes when building your website, then doing-it-yourself may be the way to go. However, since your expertise is most likely not web design, I suggest you seek a professional to assist you in building or updating your website.

Here are some suggestions: Elance.com or 99designs.com are crowdsourcing website services that allow you to post your website development job search online to reach out for competitive bids. You compile company information and your design needs and post the job with the service. The crowdsourcing services will then post the job to a vast network of contractors who will bid on your job. Once you select a designer, they go to work to create your website.


For those of you looking to enhance or refresh your current website, services like MarketingTactics.com are available to improve the look, feel and functionality of your site.

Choose a good domain name, which will typically be the name of your company. Your website’s domain name is your Internet address. It’s what visitors will type in the address bar when searching for your company. A domain name can be any combination of letters and/or numbers up to 63 characters; however, try to keep it short—less than 15 characters if possible. A short domain name will be easier for people to remember and will reduce the likelihood that your visitors will misspell it.

Website Host. Next you must decide who will host your website. The “host” is the computer server where your website lives and how it maintains connectivity to the Internet. Very few companies in the Green Industry have the resources to host their own website, so most likely you will outsource that aspect of the website. Sources for hosts include: Justhost.com, HostGator.com, GoDaddy.com, iPage.com, Bluehost.com, WebHostingHub.com and many more.
The main consideration when choosing a website host is to find out how reliable and quickly their customer service department responds if and when your site has issues. Give the host site a call on the weekend and see what kind of response you get! Or send them an email and time their response. If all you get is on-hold music, keep searching.

**WEBSITE PAGES**

First impressions are everything! Your site must clearly convey your message and/or describe the benefits of your products/services in a manner that helps solve the visitor’s problems, satisfies their desires or educates, informs or entertains them so they will come back for more. You’ve only got a few seconds to capture their attention. Will your site get visitors to stick around long enough to pique their interest?

The **content** of your website is what will keep people coming back or not. Your website should answer the questions viewers will be asking when they visit your site. What does this company do? What are their qualifications for the work they do? Do they have a portfolio of work and references? How do I get in touch with them? Do they offer consultations and design services? What are their specialties? Where are they located? Do they work in my neighborhood?

Forget what you think is cool. Think like a potential visitor to your website. Does your site contain relevant information that people are interested in and searching for? When you understand what’s important to your buyers, you can build web content especially for them. Think of what you look for when searching a website. Then apply those thoughts to your site.

**Home Page.** The most effective websites are informational, and not sales pitches. They are easy to navigate and let the viewer know the nature of your services. Your home page is usually the first page a user sees when visiting your website. Typically, the **home page** will consist of a general overview of what your company does, along with a variety of tabs that will allow the user to navigate to other more specific areas of your website.

Your website’s home page serves as the “main directory” for the rest of your website. **Landing pages**, however, are individual web pages where visitors can learn specific information regarding the various products or services you offer.
Landing Pages vs. Home Pages
Here’s an example of the difference between the effectiveness of landing pages versus home pages. Recently, I typed in “outdoor kitchen installers in Phoenix” as a Google search. The typical Google search results look like this: the top three listings highlighted in yellow are paid advertisements. These companies have purchased “keywords or phrases” and are listed first. The other “paid ads” are those listings on the right hand side of the search results page. Underneath the yellow listings are all of the “organically placed” listings. Companies that show up in the organic listings section did not pay for their spot on the page. (We’ll discuss search engine marketing and search engine optimization in a later chapter.)

I clicked on the first listing in the “paid” section and was directed to the home page of that company. I did not see any reference to outdoor kitchens; however, buried deep somewhere in the text of their home page, there must have been the words “outdoor...kitchen...installers...Phoenix.” I clicked on the second and third “paid” listings and again, the pages that appeared had nothing to do with outdoor kitchens. Instead, what came up was each company’s home page. These three companies paid for the keywords, “outdoor, kitchens, installers or Phoenix.” But only one of them actually did outdoor kitchen installation.

At the top of the organic search list was Unique Landscapes. When I clicked on their listing, I wasn’t taken to their home page. I was directed to their landing page featuring outdoor kitchens. The first three “paid ads” gave me a bait-and-switch feeling. I was specifically looking for outdoor kitchens, and instead got generic web pages. I immediately clicked off these pages and continued my search for companies who specialized in outdoor kitchen installations.

Unique Landscape did not opt for paid ad rankings for their organic position on Google. However, what they have created is a specific landing page for people seeking information about outdoor kitchen installations.

About Us. Most websites have an About Us page but many lack pictures of the business owner or staff members. If you have an About Us page, humanize your website. Show your website visitors a picture of you and your team. It’s not just about plants and irrigation and decking. People are buying landscape services from people, so let them get a glimpse of who you are. Let your viewers know how your team can solve their problems or satisfy their dreams. Let them know about the qualifications and experiences you and your team bring to the jobsite.
Our Promise. Rather than boast about your Mission Statement, offer up an Our Promise page. People really don’t care about your “mission.” What they do care about are the promises you make and whether or not your company makes good on them.

Our Portfolio. Show off your work with a portfolio page of high quality pictures of your work. Green Industry websites should be image rich. Let your website visitors see a sampling of the work you do. Use your site to tell visual stories about how customers utilized your services to satisfy their landscape and irrigation needs. Smartphones take decent pictures; however, it will serve you much better to utilize the services of a professional photographer. After all, your portfolio is your proof of performance, so the better the images look, the better the impression your website will make.

FAQ’s and Q&A. Since many visitors are looking for answers to their questions, an FAQ or Q&A page can be very valuable to help educate them. Use these pages to establish credibility and your knowledge of the trade.

Contact Us. Also, if you are to gain new sales leads, your website must have a Contact Us page. Make it easy for your visitors to contact you. Perhaps you’ve got a company brochure or created a white paper outlining the “Four Secrets to Installing a Water Saving Irrigation System.” Give your visitors an easy way to request more information, however, do not ask for too much. If your brochure or white paper is in pdf format, you could simply ask for the viewer’s name and email address. When a website begins asking for too much, the dropout rate climbs rapidly.

Our Blog. If you write a blog, allocate a tab to post your blog info.

WEBSITE MAINTENANCE

Like your trucks and equipment, websites are dynamic marketing tools that require periodic maintenance. When’s the last time you updated the information on your website? If it’s been awhile, you should look into services to help you manage the content of your site. Visit Drupal.org or ExpressionEngine.com for additional info.

One simple content refresh idea would be to display a new photo of a recently completed project on the Home or Portfolio page. Another idea is to use your website to move people to your blog. We will look at the value of blogging in a later chapter.
A summary of Website considerations:

- Make it **image rich** and visually pleasing to visit and include a quick loading **Project Portfolio**.
- Make it **easy to navigate** and easy to locate the key elements of your company.
- Make sure **contact information** is easy to find and you respond ASAP!
- Explain what you do in simple, easy-to-understand terms.
- Use your website to **establish credibility**:  
  - Put your **head shot** prominently on the **About Us** landing page.
  - Include **pictures and brief bios** of key staff – people want to know who they will be dealing with if they choose to do business with your company.
  - Include **testimonials** from satisfied clients (video testimonials if possible).
- Fill your website pages with **compelling content**.
- Subscribe to **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** services. The best looking, easy-to-navigate website only becomes a good investment when people can find it! The key to SEO is selecting the **keywords and phrases** that will help your website rise to the top of the search stacks. More on this in Chapter 17.
- Your website should **encourage inquiries** about your services (lead generation). Decide what you want to capture from those inquiring (email address, phone #, etc.). Keep the forms simple!
- Use your website to **educate and entertain viewers**.
- Use **website analytics** to track your clicks and click-throughs.

**Chapter 10 – Crafting Content**

**Content Marketing.** Successful inbound/Internet marketing is about gaining people’s interest and engaging them by providing provocative content, rather than buying it through traditional marketing channels. The main idea behind the inbound marketing strategy is that when buyers are motivated and ready to make a purchase, they will go to the Internet to find their solution. Those companies who maintain an appealing presence and capture the customer’s attention on the web are those who will most likely have the opportunity to serve the customer.

Inbound marketing experts will tell you that the key component of any successful inbound marketing campaign is compelling content. Content is the information you post on your website, in your blog, in your Tweets and on your Facebook page. **Compelling content** is information, stories, pictures and movies that will attract the
interest and attention of potential customers to your website or to your business. Compelling content helps answer questions, satisfy desires or solve problems your viewers may have.

Take a close look at the content on your website. Is your website providing viewers with information that will help them solve their landscape problems or satisfy their desires? Rather than simply state that you install drain lines, good content would explain the function of good drainage and why it’s so important for the long-term success of the landscape installation. Think of what problems your customers experience and what questions they may have regarding the services you provide. Put yourself in their shoes. Then create content that addresses the issues and answers the questions your potential customers have.

What you say, and how you say it on your website, in your blogs, Tweets, and Facebook posts will determine whether or not buyers find you online—and whether or not they stick around long enough for you to develop a relationship with them.

Creating a Content Campaign:
1. **Commit** to content creation as part of your inbound strategy.
2. Determine your **delivery tactics**. (How you will deliver the information? Via your website, blog, Facebook, etc.?)
3. **Get to know your target audience** (ideal customer). What are they looking for when they visit your website, your blog, your Facebook page? What would help them solve their problems or satisfy their desires? What information, stories, pictures will capture their interest? What can you teach your audience that they never knew existed in a fun, visual and entertaining manner?
4. **Schedule time** to create and post your helpful information.
5. **Capture contact information** by requesting feedback or offering additional information.

Good content isn’t about what you sell. It’s about how your company can enrich the lives of your customers. It’s about providing people a look into experiences that they didn’t know they were missing out on. Good content turns browsers into buyers.

**Content Marketing Resources:**

*Content Rules* by Ann Handley and CC Chapman

*Content Marketing* by Rebecca Lieb

*Get Content Get Customers* by Joe Pulizzi

*Scribit.com* – purveyor of fine content

*Eloqua.com* – a leader in lead generation services
Chapter 11 -

Search Engine Marketing and Search Engine Optimization

According to Danny Sullivan, Editor-in-chief of *Search Engine Land*, Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is the process of driving prospective customers to your website from traffic generated by search engines. If potential customers can’t find your business online, you are missing out on a huge piece of the market.

The key to getting found online is to first have an online presence such as a website, a blog or a Facebook page. Then, the content you post on these sites needs to contain keywords or phrases that your potential customers would be most likely to type into a search bar. This is where you need to think like your customer, rather than thinking as the owner of the business, because what you may believe to be “keywords” may not exist in the mind’s eye of your prospective customer.

Examples of keywords customers may be using include: Your company name, landscapers in [city/region], landscape contractors [your state] landscaping/landscaper/landscape companies, lawn care, landscape ideas, professional landscaping, pool landscaping, low maintenance landscaping, garden landscapes, and edible landscapes.

When buyers begin searching for products or services, they go to Google, Yahoo! or Bing. These three popular search engines make it easy for potential customers to find your website, as long as you have posted good information and include keywords or phrases within the text you’ve written.

There are two basic ways your company can show up in search results: It can show up organically or through paid listings. Organic search listings appear without
anyone paying for them. They are provided by search engines as a service for those using the search engine. Google, Yahoo! and Bing use complex mathematical algorithms to guess which websites a user is seeking when a word or phrase is typed into the search bar.

As an example, if you were to type in “edible garden installers in Phoenix AZ,” the search engine “crawlers” seek throughout the Internet for websites that contain words or phrases matching or similar to the ones typed into the search bar. The results that appear will consist of the organic, non-paid sites along with those companies who have paid for keywords.

Paid search listings (like Google AdWords™ listings) provide the advertiser the opportunity to get their website posted in the “paid” sections of the search listings. In Google, the “paid” advertisements will typically appear as the top three listings highlighted in yellow or those along the right column of the search results. If your company does not show up on page one in either the paid or organic columns, the chances are the user will bypass your site altogether.

**Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** is the process of maximizing your search results by driving traffic to your website via the content contained within and outside of your website without subscribing to a pay-per-click service.

Search engines like Google, Yahoo! and Bing are the “librarians” of the Internet. Their systems send out “crawlers” into the web to collect information about every page on the web so they can help people find what they’re looking for online.

If your company has a website, search results matter. When your pages have higher rankings, more prospective customers will find you on the web. The key to high rankings is to make sure your website has the ingredients that search engines are after. The more ingredients, the higher the ranking.

**Some important ingredients include the following:**

- **Titles.** The title of your website matters as search engines pay close attention to the title or name of your website.
- **Description Meta Tag.** When your webmaster builds your site, make sure s/he includes a descriptive summary of what your business is all about.
- **Words.** Search engines account for every word on the web, so the words you use to describe your services within your website matter greatly as to how your website will rank.
• **Links.** Links between websites matter. When one site links to another, it’s usually considered a recommendation. A link between your blog and your website will help improve your ranking.

• **Words in Links.** Web crawlers like it when the words you use in your blog and on your website are the same! Word links also help your search ranking.

• **Reputation.** Sites with a consistent record of fresh and engaging content and a growing number of quality links are viewed favorably by search engines and fare well in search rankings. This is where your consistent and content rich blog can really help drive your website ranking up the organic search ladder. Good SEO is about making sure your website, blog and other online media has great content supported by the ingredients that search engines need for determining website rankings.

**References:** Google’s Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide and SearchEngineLand.com

Let’s now explore blogging!

**Chapter 12 - Blogging**

Originally called a weblog, a blog is a personal or company website featuring discussion or information written by a blogger to disseminate information about a topic of a specific nature. Typically, the blogger is passionate about the subject matter and uses the blog to share that passion with an online community.

Blogging allows you to post your ideas and thoughts regarding any topic you choose. It allows you to show off your personality and your passions. But don’t use your blog to simply hype your company. We’re back to the importance of content rich information—information that your readers will find valuable. Information that will help you become a trusted resource and a desirable company to do business with.

Blogs are also a great way to get found by search engines. Every word of every post is indexed by the search engines which helps drive traffic to your blog and to your website. Blogs that are regularly updated generate high search engine rankings because the algorithms used by most all search engines reward blogs that update frequently.

Although not a requirement, many blogs encourage reader participation and comment. If you are reading other blogs, by adding a comment on their blog you can link to your profile on the web, helping others find your blog and website.
Creating Your Blog

Start by picking a topic you are passionate about. This will most likely be something related to your business. It could be a specialty of yours or it could be more general in nature. But pick something that you have lots of experience with.

To Host or not to Host. Next you will need to decide whether you want to host your blog or have it hosted for you. There are plenty of free blogging services out there. My blog is hosted by Blogger.com. However, I don’t own the blog, and if ever I want to move to my own domain, I have no way to take my readers with me as I have no control over the site other than to post my blogs.

The other option is to create your own blog using a service like WordPress, then pay a service to host it for you. This option gives you plenty of flexibility and you own the site. You will have your own domain name and will have full control over the site. Cost for this approach is minimal, and there are several options. An excellent option for new bloggers is Dreamhost.com because they seem to care. GoDaddy.com also offers blog hosting as does 1and1.com and many others.

Once you’ve chosen a hosting option, you’ll need to choose a domain name. This is what you will call your blog. Once you’ve got your blog’s template in place, now is the time to get started.

What to Blog?

Good content and consistency are the keys to successful blogging. They are also the blogger’s main challenges. Good content comes from that which you are passionate about. Start there. If you are passionate about sustainable landscapes, your first few posts could be general information regarding sustainability. A subset of this could be to drill down and focus on the specifics of sustainable landscapes, like water-wise irrigation. Then you could drill down even further and discuss the pros (and cons) of drip or micro-irrigation.

If you run out of ideas, just go to a search engine and type in “sustainable landscaping” and within 0.26 seconds you will have over 1,300,000 search results that will help get your creative juices flowing. One of those 1.3 million sites will be nrdc.org, the Natural Resources Defense Council, which offers a wealth of information and they want you to use it to spread the word about subjects like sustainability, water conservation, energy, air quality, health, etc. These are all topics that people who invest in landscapes may find of interest, and could certainly help you create good blogging content.
Finding subject matter is the easy part. Your blog could consist mainly of pictures of the work you’ve performed over the years, with a brief description of the scope of work, and the joy your customers gained by the features you constructed.

The main challenge may very well be making the time to create your content on a consistent basis. If you choose to do a blog, I highly recommend you allocate at least 2 to 4 hours a week to draft up your content. When you are ready to get down to writing, find a quiet space where you will not be interrupted! That may mean getting out of the office and holing up at your local library or coffee house. Go somewhere quiet. Turn off your cell phone. Crack open your laptop or tablet and bang away on the keys!

The power of the blog is amazing. At first, you are likely to experience little to no traffic. Do not despair! If you are consistent and continue to post good information with appropriate keywords, visitors will come. Many blog sites offer a keyword function to help you fill your blog posts with the words and phrases that will help get your blog found.

**Unwritten Blog Rule:** Do not use your blog to hype your company. Use it to offer up information that your current and soon-to-be customers can use and apply to their daily lives.


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**Chapter 13 – Facebook™**

If Facebook were a country, it would be the world’s third largest behind China and India! On average, those who subscribe to this social media giant are spending almost an hour a day perusing Facebook. These are staggering statistics that have made modern day marketers pay close attention to the social media revolution.

With close to a billion users, Facebook is definitely an inbound marketing tool that can help you deliver valuable content to a network of people that have an interest in you and what you do. However, if you choose to market your company through Facebook, remember that this media is not about running advertisements or
promotions or generating hype. Like all social media, your Facebook page should be set up to inform, educate or entertain—not to blatantly pitch your products or services.

**Facebook Pages.** To keep your personal information separate from your business, it makes sense to create a Facebook page specifically for your company. Here you can post messages, links, articles, videos, job photos and other information that will help you build connections with your desired audience. Because your Facebook page is about your company, it is acceptable to provide information about what your company does and how it serves the market. Yet, do not go overboard with the sales pitch. Build a following by providing good content first and the sales will take care of themselves.

The power of Facebook lies in what you post on your wall, and whether or not those who visit your site “like” what was posted. Whenever one of your Facebook friends “likes”, comments on, or “tags” something you have posted on your page, the like or tag can appear on their Facebook profile and updates for all of their friends to see. The compounding power of Facebook is incredible. Say, for example, your company’s Facebook page has 100 friends and each of these friends has 100 friends and those 100 friends have 100 friends. If you were to post something on your page, it could possibly be viewed by a million+ people (100 x 100 x 100)! And the cost to you for posting? Your time and imagination. The cost of reaching one million people via traditional outbound marketing methods? Call the Brinks® truck!

There is really no limit to what you can post on your Facebook page; however, the wise social media Green Industry marketer should choose to post visually pleasing images of their work and content rich information and stories that will capture the attention of those viewing the page. The purpose of having a Facebook page is to give you the opportunity to regularly engage those who are following what you do so you can build or strengthen your relationship with your network and potential customers. Your Facebook page can help you create a personal relationship between your company and clients and prospects without geographical boundaries.

**Facebook Advertising.** Although Facebook began solely as a social gathering place, the opportunity for revenue generation was simply too great to ignore, so in 2006, Facebook began producing income from online advertisements. Facebook Ads (or Sponsored Stories) are the ads that appear on the right hand side of the Facebook website. According to Facebook, these ads are directed to a finely defined target
audience based on the criteria given to Facebook by the advertiser. Like other online advertising opportunities, you can set a “daily budget” for your ad, so your budget won’t get blown in a single day.

I’m not convinced that placing an ad on Facebook is a sound investment, as the primary reason for being there is not to advertise your company’s services. I believe the attitude should be to engage your audience with interesting and engaging posts, rather than boring them with sales speak.

Facebook also offers promoted posts, and most recently, sponsored results for their search feature, which could help increase the number of people viewing your posts and page.

Another value of Facebook is that by using the right keywords in your posts, you will be increasing your company’s visibility and potential search ranking since Facebook is indexed by all of the major search engines.

Chapter 14 – Google™

Google is the world’s largest search engine claiming to have over 80% of the Internet’s search traffic. The mission of Google is “to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.” To “Google” something is to search for information pertaining to the subject on the Internet. If you or your company were “Googled,” what would appear?

Since the early days when Google was primarily an Internet search engine, the company has expanded out in many new directions. Google+™ social service is Google’s response to Facebook. Google Places™ business listings is a free localized listing for businesses. A Google Webmaster Central™ Account is a connection inside Google, and allows your webmaster to analyze the data collected by Google regarding traffic to your website. Of particular interest to marketers, Google Analytics™ is a free service offered by Google that generates detailed statistics about visitors to your website.

Google AdWords™ advertising service is the company’s main source of revenue. AdWords is a pay-per-click, cost-per-thousand or a cost-per-mile Internet advertising service that can be set up on a local, national or international basis. When
subscribing to Adwords, you only pay when someone clicks on your website, so controlling your AdWords budget is easy. The idea behind subscribing to AdWords is that when consumers are ready to buy, they go to Google and type in “keywords” or phrases to locate companies that offer the products or services they desire.

If your **Ad Rank** is high, it’s likely your company will show up on the first page of the Google search. (Your Ad Rank is based on how much you are willing to spend on keywords along with your Quality Score—a measurement of the quality of your ad, keywords and your website). If your website does not appear on the first page of a Google search, there is very little chance that the consumer will find your website.

**Google Places.** Google states that 97% of consumers search for local businesses online, and suggest that you be present when customers go shopping for the services you offer. Google Places is a free listing that allows you to customize what you want your audience to see. Your Google Places page can host pictures of your business, your business hours, areas served, a link to your website and anything else that helps explain what you do.

You can visit your Google Places page any time and take advantage of the analytics to see how many people have clicked on your listing. Chances are your business is already listed by Google so it is prudent to verify and amend your company’s information. To do so, Google your company name and see what appears.

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**Chapter 15 – More Social Media Opportunities**

What other social media opportunities are worth your time? Ask some of your current customers what social media sites they use. Or try a few out, and see which is the right fit for you. It’s important to note that while social media may not take a lot of money to do, it does take time to keep each of your pages updated.

**YouTube** is a video sharing website. Now owned by Google, YouTube offers Green Industry companies the opportunity to visually display their craftsmanship and customer testimonials with video posts online and on their websites. Like many other social media tools, clicks on your YouTube videos will help increase your rankings amongst the Internet’s search engines.
Pinterest is a photo sharing website that allows users to create and manage theme-based image collections of events, interests, hobbies and more. One of the fastest growing social media platforms, Pinterest is now the 3rd largest social network, surpassing LinkedIn and following only Facebook and Twitter.

Pinterest offers an excellent opportunity for Green Industry professionals to post pictures of their work, which can help drive traffic to their websites. When you are pinning images of your work, do so by using the links to your website, so your pin will help drive traffic back to your website. And create pin boards that would be relevant to you customers, such as “Oregon landscapes” or “edible plants.”

Instagram is a photo-sharing program and social network that allows users to take pictures, apply a digital filter to them and then share their photos with other Instagram users via a smart phone or tablet. With Instagram, you can tell a story through the interesting things you see on any given day. Rather than the standard 4x3 aspect ratio mobile phones support, Instagram reduces images to a square.

Flickr is a photo management and sharing website with two main goals: to help people make their photos available to the people that matter to them, and to enable new ways of organizing photos and videos. In addition to being a popular website for users to share and embed personal photographs, the service is widely used by bloggers to host images that they embed in blogs and social media sites.

Photos and videos can be accessed from Flickr without being a registered user; however in order to upload content onto the website, one must register. Registering an account also allows users to create a profile page containing photos and videos that the user has uploaded and also grants the ability to add another Flickr user as a contact.

Twitter is an online social networking service that allows users to read and post text-based “Tweets” of up to 140 characters. Tweets are micro-blogs that can help keep you connected to those who follow you or to those whom you follow. Twitter is an excellent way to share links to your blog, YouTube videos and other web-based content that you feel will be of interest to those following you.

LinkedIn is the world’s largest business networking database that “links” people of all professions with one another. LinkedIn is a marketing tool for what Tom Peters describes as: Brand YOU. It is considered a premier “business-focused” networking site.

If you have not yet become LinkedIn, you are telling the business world and your prospects that you have not kept pace with the rapidly changing Internet based
marketplace. When you create your personal profile, highlight your achievements and qualifications. You can also create a company page on LinkedIn as well, with information for potential customers and employees.

LinkedIn also features discussion groups that enable you to initiate or contribute to discussions focused around topics of interest to group members.

**Angie’s List** is a fee based membership website that allows its subscribers to review and comment on the services of the companies they have hired. Primary focus seems to be on ranking health care providers. However, subscribers are able to review Green Industry companies as well. Currently, Angie’s list has 1.5 million paid subscribers.

Angie’s List grades companies using an A to F rating system based on the feedback they receive from their members. There are no anonymous reviews. The ratings are based on the following criteria: price, quality, responsiveness, punctuality and professionalism. Each company reviewed has its own page, which is composed of a description of its business along with the customer reviews. The aggregate grade is drawn from the combined reviews and grades given to the businesses from the consumers.

Service companies that average an A or B rating can advertise on Angie’s List; however, they cannot pay to have their ranking upgraded or negative reviews removed. If a company receives a negative review, the complaining party and or the service provider can contact the Complaint Resolution department to work through the complaint. Negative reviews that are resolved are removed from the service providers page.

**Yelp!** is a free business rating service that combines local reviews with social networking functionality to create an online community. It is a guide to help people find restaurants, shops and even landscape contractors. Unlike Angie’s List, business owners can set up a free account to post photos and messages to customers. Yelp makes money by selling ad space to local businesses.
As you begin creating and using social networking pages, start following some of your favorite brands for inspiration. What posts and messages connect with you? See if you can apply their ideas in your own social media strategy.

Then begin to build your audience by letting people know about your page(s). Post links to social media pages on your website, emails, marketing materials and wherever else to start building your followers. Do you have any super fans: longtime customers, friends, family, business partners, etc.? Ask them to share your page and posts, and “recommend” your company.

For more social media tips, news and ideas, visit SocialMedia Examiner.com or Mashable.com.

**Chapter 16 – The Ultimate Marketing Tactics**

Your website and your online presence are very important to your marketing mix, and I don’t want to discount their value; however, I am convinced that three very powerful, cost effective and easy-to-implement marketing tactics that all companies in the Green Industry should subscribe to are: **Follow up**, offering **distinctively different customer service** and offering an **industry best warranty**.

Let’s begin with **Service**. What is customer service? Generally speaking, customer service can be defined as the **manner** in which a service provider delivers the products or services sold. It is about the **attitude and behavior** of the service provider when they come into contact with the customer. Customer service is about the **impressions** the service provider makes at that all-important **moment of truth**, when the service provider gets eyeball-to-eyeball with the customer. Impressions made will either be good, bad or indifferent. Only one of those benefits your company.

Customer service is everything that service providers do to enhance the level of satisfaction that customers have when they buy things. Distinctively different customer service is simply going above and beyond the expected. And the good news is you don’t have to go way beyond the expected to achieve distinctively different! Often, just performing the bare bones minimum level of service is
enthusiastically welcomed by customers who are expecting very little from companies in the industry.

What is the expected level of service that your clients demand of you? Have you asked? If you have discovered what good customer service means to your client, is everyone on your staff—from the receptionist to the field laborer—aware of these expectations, and working diligently each day to meet them?

When companies offer great service on a regular basis, they chalk up positive credits on the Customer Satisfaction Ledger. However, seemingly innocuous service errors over time can add up to large debits on the ledger, and suddenly out of nowhere, the client fires you! If you are in the maintenance business or deal with repeat customers, be sure you keep close tabs on the Customer Satisfaction Ledger. Customer satisfaction is the difference between what the customer expects and what they receive. Regularly ask your customers “How are we doing? What could we do to better serve you?”

Common responses to “What are your service expectations?” include the following:

“Show up when you say you will.”
“Return my calls (emails, text messages) promptly.”
“Keep the promises you made.”
“Communicate with me throughout the project.”
“Respect the privacy of my family. Respect my home.”
“Fix mistakes promptly and without hassle.”

The Benefits of Delivering Distinctively Different Customer Service:

Referrals. The most cost effective customer is the one who was referred to you. Companies who offer great service get referred. Great service is about getting people raving about your company and recommending you to others.
Retention. It will cost you many times more to find new customers than it will to keep the ones you’ve already got. Great service helps keep clients coming back for more and saves you a boatload of money in the process.

Market differentiator/competitive advantage. All companies have the option to compete with price, compete with quality or compete with service. If you choose to compete on price, you are only as good as your next low bid. If you choose to compete in the “quality” arena, join the crowd. If you plan to compete with great service, make sure you know what that means, and then train all staff to meet your client’s service expectations. It’s one thing to boast, “we offer superior customer service!” It’s another thing to consistently live up to that claim. However, if you do, your company will gain a large competitive advantage in a generally underserved marketplace.

Increased profits. Consistently delivering great service creates loyal customers who advocate your company and refer you to others. There is far less price sensitivity from loyalists and referrals. Bottom line: great service providers make more money than those who don’t deliver decent service.

Creating a Company Culture around Service Excellence
Implementing a Service Excellence marketing tactic and validating your claim of providing “excellent customer service” means training everyone on staff how to provide great customer care every day. In the service game, there is only one level of service that matters; at the moment of truth, when the customer meets eye-to-eye (or voice-to-voice when on the phone) with your employee, he or she must treat the customer with the utmost care and respect. When this happens, your company will gain a reputation for being superior service providers. Don’t just claim it; train your people to practice excellent service. The cost of giving great service is minimal. The cost of providing poor service is painful.

Exposing your Warts
A notable way to create trust with prospective clients is to be brutally honest about the quality of service you provide. Chances are, even if your staff is comprised of “Service Eagles” there will be times when someone drops the service ball. Let your prospective clients know that this does happen from time-to-time. Also let them know how your company responds if the service ball begins bouncing down the wrong path.

People know that nothing is perfect. It’s typically not the problem that is the real issue; it’s how your company responds to the problem that will make the difference. A slow or indifferent approach to problems or issues will infuriate customers. A quick, no-questions-asked approach will delight the client. And delighted clients are usually very willing to recommend your services to others!
Customers know that nothing in the field goes smoothly 100% of the time. There are always hiccups along the way. What your customers want is the **peace of mind** that when there is a bump in the road, your company will take care of the issues without hassle. Perhaps your most powerful marketing message may be “Hey, we do a pretty good job most of the time. However, there are times when we have dropped the ball. We’ve learned from our past experiences that if we respond to problems quickly, courteously and efficiently, we can get the project back on track to our customer’s complete satisfaction. But please do not take our word for this. We encourage you to contact the following list of customers where their project encountered problems. Ask them what we did to remedy the issues. Our goal is 100% customer satisfaction. Sometimes that means working through difficult problems.”

**The Bottom Line:** The cost to your company for delivering distinctively different service is virtually nothing! The greatest expense comes from discovering what great service means to each individual client and then training all staff to perform as needed. Yet the benefit of that expense far outweighs the cost to the business when the service ball is dropped.

**Warranty - Putting Your Money Where Your Mouth Is!**

If your work is as good as you say it is, put your money and reputation on the line. Offer an industry leading warranty like the car manufacturer Hyundai. In the United States, Hyundai originally began competing in the low price car category. However, with low price came poor quality cars. Their U.S. sales began to sag badly as consumers became disgusted with the poor quality. In 1998, Hyundai had a choice: pull out of the U.S. market, or change what they were doing.

They chose change. Hyundai dramatically improved the quality of their cars. They also decided to put their money where their mouth was. Hyundai began offering an incredible warranty: 100,000 miles/10 years. The quality initiative did not happen overnight; however, by 2009, Hyundai was ranked 4th overall for quality by JD Powers behind only Lexus, Porsche and Cadillac. And their U.S. sales skyrocketed!

If you want to stand out in the overcrowded Green Industry market, offer up a warranty that towers over your competitors.

If you want to stand out in the overcrowded Green Industry market, offer up a warranty that towers over your competitors and back it up with the top-notch craftsmanship and service you say you provide. Keep this in mind: customers are always looking to do business with people who give them peace of mind (strong warranty), and they are willing to pay more for hassle-free service.
The final marketing tactic I highly recommend is to initiate a regularly scheduled good old-fashioned follow up program. Effective follow up is the simple act of getting back in touch with your past and current customers, your colleagues and your conduits in a timely manner. It’s keeping in touch with those who didn’t buy from you. It’s acknowledging good performance by your staff, subcontractors and suppliers. It’s sending a card or email to people you’ve met at a business function or tradeshow.

Follow up is about staying present in the mind of those people who are important to your business. Make a habit of promptly following up with the folks who are critical to the success of your business.

Follow up differentiates. Do contractors in general send out thank you notes or place a thoughtful telephone call expressing gratitude for the opportunity to bid or perform work? If you do, your company will clearly be in the minority and stand out favorably.

Follow up gets you right back on the forefront of the business development cycle—lead generation. When you follow up with your satisfied customers, you develop a strong relationship and a built-in lead generation machine.

Follow up lets your customers, colleagues and conduits know they are important to you and your business.

Follow up gives you the opportunity to sell additional services to your past and existing clients.

Follow up costs virtually nothing!

If you do buy into the huge potential value of follow up, take the time to establish a follow up calendar. Make it a point to follow up after every meeting. Be sure to follow up immediately following the completion of the project. Mark down specific dates in your planner to do monthly, quarterly, bi-annual or annual follow up with your network of key customers, colleagues and conduits.

The benefits of follow up are plenty! It is far more expensive to find new customers than to keep the one’s you’ve already got! It is a heck of a lot easier to sell to referrals than to those seeking RFPs. Follow up keeps you fresh in the client’s mind, otherwise; the daily dust cloud of activity will cause their memory of you to fade.

Remember: Out of sight = out of mind = out of the Referral Network! So stay in touch with your past business relationships! They represent your least expensive,
most effective marketing tool. Follow up reinforces the relationship and bond you developed with the client throughout the entire project.

Here are some of the many ways to keep in touch with those people important to the long-term success of your business:

• Follow up after the completion of every project with a thank you card—you cannot say “thank you” enough!
• Follow up with an anniversary card each year following the completion of the project.
• Follow up every meeting with a short note or letter.
• Follow up with a personal phone call.
• Follow up with an email regarding a “gardening tip” or some other helpful advice.
• Follow up with an invitation
  – to attend an educational workshop
  – to attend an event – home show, Evening under the Stars
  – to follow your blog
• Follow up with those you meet at an event, tradeshow or association meeting.
• Follow up with a fax. Nobody sends faxes any more. That strange buzzing sound from over by the dusty old fax machine will surely create curiosity!
• Follow up with a personal visit.
• Follow up a referral with a thank you gift.

A consistent follow up plan will cost you very little, put you in a very elite group of Marketing Masters and will become a terrific source for referral business.

Case Study: Earlier this year, I got a phone call from Chad, owner of All Star Windows. Chad’s company provides window and screen cleaning services. He is making his regularly scheduled “marketing calls” to past and current customers asking us if we would like to schedule another window and screen cleaning. He called us in January; however, we weren’t ready for him then. He asked us when he should call back. My wife told him to call back in three months. He scheduled the call in his planner. He called back at the beginning of April—exactly three months to the day from his earlier call. Cost of his follow up campaign marketing activity: a phone call. Return on that investment: $285 in revenue. We hired him to clean our windows and screens. (Follow up works!)

When I interviewed Chad, he told me his main source of revenue comes from his existing customers, and referrals from them. So marketing to existing customers is critical for his continued success. Chad’s primary marketing activity: scheduled follow up phone calls. For new business, he relies on the Yellow Pages, YellowPages.com and his website.
Chapter 17 – Your Marketing Budget

Your marketing budget is an estimate of the projected costs of the tactics and activities you will use to best reach your target audience. A general rule of thumb says you should invest anywhere from 2 – 10% of gross sales or more depending on several factors. How long you have been in business will influence your marketing budget. Typically, newer companies will need to invest more in marketing than well established businesses because consumers are unfamiliar with new entries to the marketplace.

Take a close look at your income statement (profit/loss statement) to determine what you have historically invested in advertising and marketing. Analyze the current economic condition of your market. Choose to invest in those marketing activities that you believe will help you achieve your goals. Then track and measure the results!

You certainly don’t want to spend your way out of business; however, if you don’t attract any business, you will be out of business anyway!

Chapter 18 – Measurement and Tracking

The final phase of the marketing process is to track the progress and measure the results of your marketing efforts. It won’t matter what marketing tactics you invest in if you fail to track results. If you do not track and measure your activities, you will never know whether your marketing is worth the time and money invested. Measurement must be treated equally as important as preparation, planning and implementation of your marketing efforts. I believe firmly that if you are not going to measure the effectiveness of your marketing tactics, do not employ them in the first place.
How are you currently measuring the results of your marketing efforts? If you are like many, you have a “gut feeling” about its effectiveness. Now, you must have guts to aggressively market your business, but do not rely on the gut to measure its results!

**Here’s a simple means of tracking and measuring the effectiveness of your marketing tactics:**

1. Identify each marketing tactic/activity and determine their **annualized investment cost**.
2. During the course of the year, **track** every call/email/text/etc. and determine its source. How did the person find your company? Every time someone calls your company, emails you, responds to your “Contact Us” page on your website, **ask** them how they found you. Then keep track of the results.
3. Track all **conversions** from inquiry to sale.
4. **Compare dollars** invested in each marketing tactic to the revenue generated by the tactic.
5. **Calculate the ratio** between money invested vs. sales dollars generated per tactic to determine whether or not the tactic is worth the investment.

### Sample Tracking and Measurement Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/ Tactic</th>
<th>Annual Investment</th>
<th># Leads Generated</th>
<th># Leads Sold</th>
<th>Revenue Generated</th>
<th>Marketing $ Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inbound Tactics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Improvements</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook Page</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pinterest Posts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Google AdWords™</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outbound Tactics</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Mail</td>
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<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ad in Local Newspaper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
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<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home Show</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Up/KIT/Referral</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
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<td>$</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example:** Let’s say your company invested $9,500 revamping your website, paying someone to help you blog and paying for your AdWords campaign. If, at year’s end, you calculated that you sold $126,000 worth of work from the leads your inbound tactics generated, then your marketing dollars ratio would be 126,000 to 9,500 or 13.26 to 1.
If you established your marketing budget to be 10% of gross sales, then any ratio above 10 to 1 would be beneficial to your business. However, take a close look at your current and past income statements to help you determine how much you can afford to invest in your marketing tactics. Also, if you are budgeting 10% of gross sales for marketing activities, you had better be bidding that into each project!

What sort of return on your marketing investment (ROI) will be agreeable to you? Will you be satisfied with $5,000 worth of sales for a $5,000 (one-to-one ratio) marketing investment? Have you ever measured the results of your marketing efforts? If you’ve run ads in the Yellow Pages or invested in Google AdWords, do you know what your ROI is?

I suggest you work on your marketing from time to time, and take a peek at what you are doing and measure it against the results it gets. If your Yellow Page ad brings you in a 10 to 1 ratio, by all means, keep doing it. On the other hand, if you spend $5,000 on a direct mail campaign and it generates no sales, I’d suggest you take a hard look at that campaign before you invest any more money.

No matter what matrix you use to evaluate your efforts, set aside time on a quarterly basis to evaluate the results of your marketing efforts. Set aside a couple of hours right now to measure your results. Pull out your calendar. Turn the page to three months from now. And block out the first two hours of the first Monday of that month to do your evaluations!

Chapter 19 – Making it all Happen

You have now been exposed to the fundamentals of creating a simple yet effective marketing plan. You’ve established your goals. Worked out your marketing strategy. You’ve explored several inbound and outbound marketing tactics. Now, how do you go about deciding which of these many tactics to include in your marketing plan? My suggestion is to choose only those that meet all of the following criteria:

- Choose only those tactics that once you start, you know you can finish.
- Implement one tactic at a time.
- Choose only those that make financial sense.
- Choose only those tactics that have the highest degree of helping you achieve your goals.
- Choose those that are fun to do.
- Choose only those tactics that you know you can delegate.
Start by ranking your chosen marketing tactics according to those you feel will be the most effective. Then get to work on one tactic at a time, and work at it until it’s completely in place. Then, delegate the management of tactic #1 to someone, and move on to the next tactic, and so on down the line. Soon, you will have all tactics in place and working for you the way they were intended.

**Designate a Marketing Champion**

It is important that your marketing plan has a Champion—that go-to person who is responsible for implementation, management and measurement of the plan. Someone needs to be held accountable for the successes and failures of the plan. That may be you, or it may be someone you assign to that duty; however, someone must own the plan if it is to be properly implemented and executed.

**Your Marketing Calendar** is where you indicate when you will execute those new and refreshed marketing tactics that have been designed to pump a steady flow of profitable revenue into your company’s financial veins.

For any plan to work, the tactics/activities must be committed to the calendar. What gets written down gets done! All activities must be time bound if they are to be effective. Pull out your planner or smartphone calendar and start entering your activities now. Start dates. Review dates. Measurement dates. Renewal dates.

This is the time to actually do what you said you were going to do during the planning phase of the marketing plan. It will take a large dose of commitment and discipline to actually make the plan happen. All too often, we get caught up in that daily dust cloud of activity and before you know it, the best laid plans are laying idle in a manila folder buried somewhere under a stack of paperwork.

**Align your Staff with the Plan**

Once you’ve made the effort to craft a marketing plan for your business, it is essential that you share the plan with your staff. A key component to the success or failure of your marketing plan lies in the hands of your people.

Review the plan with your staff and let them know how they fit into the overall scheme. Don’t be afraid to let them know that the company’s future (and their jobs) depends on the success of the plan, so you’d like them to be active supporters and contributors to the plan’s success.

The people who work for you can easily enhance your company’s image or tarnish it badly. Since they are often those who are most visible, they can be one of your most attractive marketing tools... or one of the more unpleasant ones. It pays to invest in educating your staff on the importance of the marketing plan and why keeping the image and brand of the company very high is vital to its long-term success.
Chapter 20 – Final Thoughts

All of us with Ewing Education Services are delighted you have chosen to download our eBook, *Filling Your Sales Pipeline – Marketing Tactics for Green Industry Professionals*. As you know, to compete profitably in today’s fast paced marketplace, we need to realize that market conditions and marketing are changing rapidly. Keeping your sales pipeline filled with a steady flow of ideal prospects has become more challenging in today’s marketplace, where Green Industry businesses the past several years have been rocked by an unsteady economy. Consumer confidence seems to rise and fall like a rollercoaster!

That’s where your marketing plan comes into play. Yet gaining the attention of an already information-overloaded consumer is ever more challenging. Today’s consumer is bombarded with more marketing messages in a single day than a person in 1902 saw, heard or read in a year! Because of this, consumers have become very keen at tuning out the multitudes of meaningless marketing messages that attempt to penetrate their consciousness. As Seth Godin points out, “interruption marketing has become ineffective.”

The intent of this program is to communicate the value of marketing, to inspire you to immerse yourself in the marketing process and to help you design and implement a marketing plan that fills your sales pipeline with ideal prospects while keeping you in touch with your all important community of customers, colleagues and conduits. Our objective is to expose you to several inbound and outbound marketing tactics that will help you take your business to the next level.

I am passionate about this program because I know from personal experience that learning the process and implementing the plan can produce an amazing outcome. Once I began putting my plan to work, my career skyrocketed, enabling me to achieve my personal and financial goals I had long ago established.
If there is but one thing I’d like you to take away from this program, it would be this: If you apply the information we shared today regarding the creation of a marketing plan and diligently implement it, you and your business will experience astounding results!

Is it easy? No. Creating, implementing, executing, tracking, measuring and adjusting your plan will take discipline and determination. It will require thought, dedication and persistence. Results rarely happen overnight so you will need to be patient with the plan. However, your plan will work if you are willing to work it!

We want to thank you for participating in this year’s Business Development Workshop. We sincerely appreciate your patronage. As you know, Ewing’s Education Services Department is dedicated to helping you and your business prosper. If you would like additional information or a one-on-one personal consultation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

John Binkele
Director of Business Education
Ewing Irrigation Products
jbinkele@ewing1.com
Appendix A –
Marketing Resources

Ewing’s Online Resources
• Facebook Page: Facebook.com/ewingirrigation
• Website: Ewing1.com
• Twitter: twitter.com/ewingirrigation
• Blog: Ewing1.com/blog

All-in-One Inbound Marketing Solution
Hubspot.com

Books
Content Rules by Ann Handley and CC Chapman
Content Marketing by Rebecca Lieb
Get Content Get Customers by Joe Pulizzi
Marketing Outrageously Redux by Jon Spoelstra
Selling the Invisible by Harry Beckwith
Social Media Sales Revolution by Landy Chase
Permission Marketing by Seth Godin
The Little Green Marketing Book by Chris Heiler
The New Rules of Green Marketing by Jacquelyn Ottman
The New Rules of Marketing and PR by David Meerman Scott
The 22 Imputable Laws of Marketing by Al Ries and Jack Trout

Blogging
WordPress.com
Blogger.com
TypePad.com

Blog Hosts
DreamHost.com
1and1.com

Content Marketing
Eloqua.com
Scribit.com

CopyBlogger.com
nrdc.org (Content for blogs)
Educational Resources

Lynda.com: online instruction of the most commonly used software programs.

Email Marketing

AceofSales.com: Jeffrey Gitomer’s email marketing system to help you open doors and close sales.

ConstantContact.com: Email marketing specialists

iContact.com: Email marketing specialists

DigitalMarketer.com: Quick and Dirty Tips for building your business with web tools.

CopyBlogger.com: Content builder for email and online marketing.

AndyHorner.com/blog: “Are you Smarter than a Missionary?”

Streamsend.com: Easy to use Email Marketing Software.

Marketing Plan Software

MarketingPlanPro.com: Easy to use software for creating your Marketing Plan.

Market Research


SEO/SEM

SearchEngineLand.com: a helpful blog that covers news and information about search engines.

Google.com: Google’s Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide. (PDF)

Website Developers/Designers

Elance.com

99designs.com

Crowdspring.com

Wordpress.com

Sites.Google.com

SquareSpace.com

Website Hosts

JustHost.com

HostGator.com

GoDaddy.com

iPage.com

BlueHost.com

WebHostingHub.com

Web maintenance

MarketingTactics.com

Drupal.org

ExpressionEngine.com