



An Investment in Credibility for Cost-Effective Marketing



By Carolyn West Price

“Oh, no, newsletters!” If that’s the feeling you have whenever the subject of a newsletter comes up, read on. It doesn’t have to be the dreaded task you may think.

In fact, if you think about it, a newsletter is an investment. It is a vehicle to accomplish two significant marketing goals: to keep you in front of contacts (clients, prospects, and referral sources) on a regular basis and to position you as the authority in your field. Assuming your marketing strategy includes being visible and credible to customers and prospects, then the newsletter is a natural way to do just that. It allows you to maintain “share of mind” or “tip of tongue” awareness in a credible manner, very different in nature than an ad or direct mailer.

Your newsletter, which should be issued at regular intervals—monthly or quarterly, for instance—should include a main article about a relevant topic, and also include some information about your company. Perhaps you can include a tid-bits section that can feature employees, announce upcoming events or contracts, and even a product profile—perhaps a new procedure or cleaner you are using. If you receive any publicity, such as inclusion in a trade publication or local paper, include reference to that, which further reinforces you as a credible resource in the building services industry.

Newsletters also make good handouts when you are pitching a new account. Since many companies in the industry are so mom-and-pop and don’t have one, a

newsletter is an inexpensive way to differentiate yourself from others. Also be sure to post your newsletter on your website, as a way to keep your site fresh and to show people you are proactive about your image and marketing. That’s a great place to ask people to subscribe, too.

In terms of production and distribution, a newsletter should be professionally designed and printed, so shop your graphic designers since prices vary even within the same market area. You don’t need Van Gogh to do your newsletter, but you don’t want a student inexperienced in pre-press (the process of getting a graphic document ready for a printing press).

You should also shop your printers. Some printers are full-service and will do the mailing for you; others just print. Some specialize in small quantities, while others are more cost-effective for large jobs only. There is no need for a newsletter to be more than two colors—black and an accent color—or more than an 8.5 x 11. Save the money on the more expensive color printing or larger size for other marketing; you would be better off doing a smaller newsletter more often (since people don’t have time to read much anyway) than a larger one less frequently.

Consider the idea of sharing the newsletter with a complementary company, as well. You not only share the cost, but you get a chance to get a silent endorsement from the other company who is presenting you to his/her clients (and vice versa).

For instance, if you provide general janitorial services, perhaps a specialist in window cleaning or carpet cleaning may want to share the newsletter with you—each taking a side of the document. If that doesn’t interest the company, maybe they will at least consider putting an ad in your newsletter to

defray some of the expense for you, while they get exposure to your recipients.

Now that we’ve talked about production, let’s talk about writing. For many people, this is the “oh, no” part of newsletters. But, there are many options. Hire an intern. Ask your employees who might like to write. Or consider a professional—a “ghost writer” who will interview you and/or condense your information into a newsletter so all you have to do is proof it, approve it, and pay the bills. For the average good writer, producing the content for an 8.5 x 11 newsletter should not take them more than a couple hours and then it’s off your plate for less than a couple hundred dollars.

Another point to make is about a natural spin-off of your newsletter effort (hence another reason for calling it an investment). Specifically, it is the opportunity to “recycle” the articles you write for your newsletters and submit them to trade newsletters or the local media as contributed pieces that will earn you a by-line. This chance to be a resource for the media gives you even greater credibility to an even broader audience that may otherwise not know of you. And, it is simply another suggestion to help you justify the energy and expense of producing a newsletter that you might otherwise be dreading.

Now, take the time to look at your 2006 calendar, plan when your newsletter will be issued, if it’s email or snail mail (or both depending upon the mix in your database). Decide who is doing what—whether you’re outsourcing all or parts, and give deadlines.

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