



Making Comfort More Visible to Customers

BY AMY FORIS

Staying visible to customers and prospects is a vital part of running a successful HVACR business in today's competitive market. Using an automated, direct-marketing system makes it easy to target new prospects and reach current customers—allowing you to be out making service calls instead of trying to develop new ways to reach potential clients.

Not only is the HVACR landscape extremely competitive, but today's consumers are more educated than ever before about equipment options, rebates and energy-efficiency; and they know they have a vast array of equipment options from which to select. The following tips can help make your direct-marketing dollars more effective.

Always use direct-response advertising—Prospects and customers need to know how you are different from all other HVACR contractors, which requires you to answer two questions: why should they respond to your ad; and what truly differentiates your business from others? Using postcards with direct-response advertising can bring better results. With no envelope to open, the addressee cannot help but see your message.

You must address WIIFM, or “what’s in it for me”—Although you may have extensive training and numerous certifications, these alone are not going to make someone pick up the phone. You need to show how the customer will benefit (satisfy a want or need) from your services and/or how your services will eliminate their pain (since pain will remain without purchase/action). That means finding out exactly why your customers do business with you. How do you find that out? Just ask—it sounds so simple, but many business owners never ask why customers work with them.

Followup is crucial—Roughly 80% of repeat sales are lost simply because customers do not receive any kind of follow-up communication. Regularly contact your customers to inform them about new products, or upgrades to existing products and/or services. You can plan out an entire year of “drip” marketing (slow, steady messaging) and work with a

company that can automate your campaign. It may take a bit of time on the front end, but it is worth the investment.

Use a three-step mailing—This type of marketing is a great way to remind customers of their spring and fall system maintenance. For example, you could conduct a postcard campaign with a stoplight on each card. The first card would feature a green light stating, “Courtesy Notification: According to our records, your A/C unit is due for preventative-maintenance service,” with large green letters saying “It’s time!” The second mailer, with a yellow light, would offer a slight variance of the original message, “Second Courtesy Notification:...” with big yellow letters stating “Your A/C is due!” The third and final mailer would feature a red light that reads, “Third Courtesy Notification:...” with “Final Notice” in bold red letters. Best results are achieved waiting 2–3 weeks between each mailing.

Features...“so what?”—Be clear by telling your customers exactly how they will benefit from doing business with you. For example, if your company offers extended hours, the answer to the “so what” question is that you work around your clients’ schedules. Rather than simply list your service hours as “available until 9:00 p.m.,” paint a picture by explaining that your customers do not have to miss work in order to get their HVACR equipment serviced, etc.

If you want to maximize your marketing budget, effectively communicate your message to consumers. Explain to them the “why,” then use these simple direct-marketing secrets to help reinforce your company’s message and achieve positive results. ☺

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