



Four Key Components to Direct Marketing

BY AMY FORIS

The ability to capture the attention of a client or prospect has never been more difficult. So, how can you be sure that your advertising and marketing dollars are contributing to your bottom line? Following are four key elements that can help provide a positive return on your investment.

Relentless communication is crucial—Whether introducing your business to new customers, saying “thank you” to current customers or asking for feedback, clients need to hear from you on a regular basis. The more you communicate, the more likely they are to use your services and not be lured away by the competition.

Develop a system to stay in touch with your customers and prospects on a regular basis. It can be scheduled on a monthly basis, around maintenance times, or it can be around holidays such as Thanksgiving or Fourth of July. You can predesign a postcard for each occasion and then use your customer mailing list or purchase a targeted-neighborhood mailing list.

Everyone still has a mailbox—Every day, millions of people go to their mailbox to see what was delivered. Generate new business and remain visible to your target audience with a direct-mail postcard. E-mail campaigns are at the mercy of spam filters and opt-outs, and some people will not open messages from a name or e-mail address they do not recognize. Sending a well-designed postcard (no envelopes to open) can capture your audience in a way that e-mail campaigns cannot.

Track, track, track—Stop guessing and start measuring what works. Include coupons or some other form of tracking, such as a “mention this postcard to receive your discount.” It is best to have different offers for each advertising vehicle. This way, you will immediately know and can track which advertising vehicle a call came from.

When working with coupons or discounts, be sure to give customers and prospects a reason to pick up the phone; a concrete reason to do business with you. Construct an offer

“**It is better to know why a customer is unhappy so you can fix the problem, rather than never know and lose a customer to a competitor.**”

that is attractive—such as a free analysis, free consultation, free demonstration, free trial use, free product sample, money off a product, or a “buy one get one free” opportunity.

If you want to give your customer or prospect a discount, use a dollar figure for your offer; \$50 off (rather than 20% off) spring maintenance. This helps to paint a picture of the offer since most customers will not know what your services cost.

Finally, ask your customers for feedback—Find out what your customers like about doing business with you and what they wish was different—and then use that information as a basis to construct copy and images in your direct-marketing campaigns. It seems simple, but many business owners are afraid to ask for feedback for fear it will be negative. It is better to know why a customer is unhappy so you can fix the problem, rather than never know and lose a customer to a competitor.

By incorporating these elements, you can put your marketing dollars to work. In a nutshell: research, test, track and choose the right advertising vehicle, and you will be on your way to developing successful direct-marketing campaigns. ☁

Amy Foris is the President of Radius Connection, which helps HVACR professionals create word-of-mouth buzz through neighborhood marketing—and offers RSES Members discounts on direct-marketing campaigns. For more information, visit www.radiusconnection.com; or e-mail aforis@radiusconnection.com or call 888-829-2249.