

President's Message



ROGER J. GIBBS

"Marketing & Advertising: Achieving "Top of Mind" Awareness" by Roger J. Gibbs

How do we market our products and our companies in today's marketplace? That question has been asked by most of us and has been brought up at every manufacturers' forum at BCMC since the forums have been established. In my opinion, the answer to the question is to take your company's marketing and advertising to the next level.

There are many forms of marketing and advertising. Marketing techniques I have used and have heard about can consist of the following:

- Present 10-minute video and information sessions. Help educate the customer by visually demonstrating the sophistication involved in bidding a job and the process the order goes through from design to manufacturing to delivery. Use this type of venue to talk about the company's business philosophy as well.
- Send out monthly flyers indicating your special program such as stock trusses with guaranteed delivery in so many days to special pricing on a specific product for that month.
- Publish monthly or quarterly newsletters describing parts of your manufacturing process or introducing your staff. This is also a good place to have your suppliers provide an article on the product you are supplying or to ask WTCA for brochures or articles of interest that would educate your customers on industry issues.
- Place monthly advertisements in the local homebuilders' newsletters or in builders' magazines that provide more regional coverage.

JUST ANY OLD TRUSS WON'T DO

What are we looking for in advertising and marketing our product? To whom do we need to market? I keep a very simple marketing concept in my mind. In my "former life" I drew a lot of house plans for contractors and individuals that needed a set of prints drawn up, and I have built a number of houses. In all cases the builder or homeowner knew what window brand they wanted. In our area they chose Anderson, Pella or others, but they were specific in what they wanted. They did not go into a lumberyard and ask for a bid on windows because if they did the lumberyard would bid the cheapest window on the market so its price looked good against the competition.

I like to relate this to trusses; a contractor or builder should not just order a set of trusses because trusses are all the same. That is far from the truth. All truss manufacturers have

specific strengths and talents within their organization that are different from the competition. You need to capture those strengths and sell them to both your current and potential customers.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Is my strength in my sales staff? Do you have the expertise to give the correct take-off in the field? Can you give the customer a price on the project the same day? Can you size the correct hangers and beams? Can you assist in providing your customer with structural solutions? Can you create value for the customer?
- Is my strength in my design department? Can you give the most efficient layout for the job to make the framing job easier? Do you optimize the best use of lumber? Do you meet with the customer to go over the preliminary placement plans and designs?
- Is my strength in manufacturing? Are you using the best grade of lumber available, such as MSR or MEL? Do your trusses have tight joints, correct plate embedment and four square sides on the lumber? Do you have automated equipment in your manufacturing process that makes having a high quality product easier?
- Is my strength in the delivery of my product? Do you meet the delivery date you confirmed with the customer? Are your drivers professional and courteous? Do you have any breakage when you deliver? Are your delivery trucks well marked and clean to further the company's professional image?

All of these are questions you need to ask yourself so that you can make sure you emphasize your strengths when marketing. Your company may have a few of these strengths with some weaknesses you need to work on, or your company may have all of these strengths plus more. In either event, remember to keep your name out in front of both your current and potential customers at all times, and do it in such a way that focuses on your company's strengths.

Consider making your advertising efforts tangible to the customer. It might seem gimmicky, but people like "stuff." They remember a company's name if they can associate it with something they use every day. For example, giving away notepads to your customers is one inexpensive piece of advertising that can be done. Hand out pencils and small pocket knives to framers. You may also want to consider advertising on hats, t-shirts or other types of clothing.

The goal of this type of marketing is to have customers think of your company first whenever they have a need to buy engineered wood components. If you've marketed your business in such a way that you create "top of mind" awareness with your customers, they will buy from you. If you use your company's strengths to provide the best possible customer service and a high quality product, they will buy from you repeatedly. And, ultimately, if your customers are valued and feel like doing business with your company helps them to be successful, they will recommend your company to their peers. Remember, word of mouth from a very satisfied customer is the best advertising money can buy.

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