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Letter from the Executive

By Tom Wessner,

Hello Friends,

Another New Year is here and with it comes a full slate: resolutions, goals, plans...the work seems never-ending.

Of course, a new year also brings with it endless possibilities. A good way to start the year is by mapping out a list of things you may have missed last year but want to take advantage of this year. For instance:

How was your company active in the community? Did you take advantage of any local publicity opportunities? Are there any major pushes (like the tax credits) that you can focus on this year?

Setting your goals and making plans helps you to stay on track. And your ACCA membership helps with that too. Let us know how we can help here at Western WPA Chapter.

Tom Wessner
President

Marketing

Planning and Goals

By Adams Hudson

Not just a few of us in the business world have been ready to turn the page on 2010 – and quick. The hurdles have been high in a tough economy, but the resilient and persistent still know how to survive and thrive. They often do so by going back to the basics. And there's nothing more basic to business success than establishing goals and creating a plan to reach them.

Where are you going and what will it take to get there? The start of the new year is the time to get those questions and answers in a format that can be used to guide your choices and measure your results.

Before you create your marketing budget for the year, take time to develop your marketing plan. That way the plan guides the development of the budget – instead of making the budget your plan.

That might sound like a bit of fancy nuance, but think of it as taking a long car trip. You start by deciding where you want to go – your goal. Then you determine each stop you want to make along the way – your plan. And then you figure in how much it will cost and how long you will stay – your budget.

Marketing planning is about strategy and understanding – getting a sense of your target market, as well as your competitive position and how you differentiate yourself from others in your market.

When money is tight, pulling back on marketing expenses can be a big temptation. Do remember the truism that never changes: you've got to spend money to make money. But also remember that your planning stage will set the groundwork for making these choices wisely.

No one advises you to spend marketing dollars freely and foolishly. Instead, bring the wisdom of planning into play and make sure every expenditure moves you toward your goals. With strategic planning, each marketing dollar is spent with a purpose.

Adams Hudson is ACCA's National Marketing Partner. Be sure to check out his seminar "Web Marketing Avalanche" at the 2011 ACCA Expo in San Antonio. You can request his free marketing ezine and free marketing reports by emailing FreeACCAstuff@hudsonink.com.

Media Planning: Consider the Alternatives

Does your media plan have any alternatives? There should be, if you're taking your alternative media choices seriously.

First, a refresher on what we mean by "alternative media." Alternative media in a marketing context is, basically, anything that promotes your message that isn't television, radio or print. And, these days, there are lots of alternatives to consider.

▪ Spin the Web

For any type of business of any size – from local to global – the most common form of "alternative media" is the Internet. Yes, today's website is yesterday's Yellow Pages, as far as providing contact information and service listings.

Internet technology – including targeted email to customers, customer response forms, printable discounts, blogs, podcasts, banner ads on linked sites, online lead generation services, and anything else that regular media can do that technology can do better (for less) – is ripe for the harvest.

▪ But Wait, There's More...

What else will you find in the alternative arena? Almost anything that you can get your name on – vehicle signage, door hangers, yard signs, refrigerator magnets, windshield scrapers, calendars, notepads, pens. Alternative paid advertising could include ads in movie theaters or on restaurant placemats, pizza boxes, or even delivery menus. And they're just the type of alternative media that gets your name in the public and reminds your customers of who you are.

▪ Your Mail's Running...

So you better go catch it! Thank-you cards, happy cards, and holiday cards are more great ways to let your customers know you appreciate them. And newsletters let them know you remember them.

But don't waste that "hold" button. When you must put a customer on hold, make use of that valuable time with on-hold messages that can pique their interest in other valuable services that you can provide.

You might even consider voice broadcast, which is a method for sending multiple outbound messages to a targeted list. You make one recording about your special offer, and it's broadcast to the customer list that's right for the message.

Oh, and remember, a little publicity from a well-timed press release can build name recognition and credibility without the hard sell of regular advertising.

"I Wonder if ACCA Has That for Me?"

Need feedback from fellow contractors? The one and only original MIX Group® program has been cited by hundreds of America's best contractors as their secret to success.

Through the exclusive ACCA MIX Group program, non-competing contractors form peer groups and serve as informal advisors, even boards of directors, to each other. MIX Groups offer the unique opportunity for contractors to learn directly from other, similar contractors in small group settings.

Yeah. ACCA has that for you.

SmartWords

"Long shots do come in and hard work, dedication and perseverance will overcome almost any prejudice and open almost any door."

John H. Johnson

Techno Tidbit

Did you know that HVAC there are fabric ducts systems that can be zippered into duct run and also be disassembled for laundering? They are also comparable to metal systems, but don't dent or rust. Check it out: www.news.thomasnet.com/fullstory/HVAC-Fabric-Air-Dispersion-System-accommodates-6-000-cfm-585902.

ACCA Benefit Highlight

New ComforTool on Indoor Air

ACCA has released the latest ComforTool for ACCA members to use to help educate customers. The newest addition to this series of flyers, "You May Need More Outside Air In Your Home," covers indoor air quality and the need for outside air in homes. Techs can leave the information with the homeowners, so they can think over their options, and because they are customizable with the company's information, it keeps the company in front of them once the decision is made.

ACCA members can download the outside air ComforTool, and any of the previous ones, for free at www.acca.org/comfortools.

The Art of Management

The Right Incentives, The Right Way

Whether it's performance-based pay or incentives, we're believers in systems that reward results. Many of you are too, but don't know how to go about getting one underway. Here's a simple method that almost anyone can use as a guideline to enact a bonus program.

1. **Start at the ending.** Decide what the heck you're trying to get done and where you want the motivation to lead.
2. **Talk to employees.** Find out *what motivates them*. You may be surprised.
3. **Match the hopeful gain for the project** to the bonus and determine a "ROI" (return on investment.) Be sure to make the money or reward indicative of the effort or you'll have no support to reach the goal.
4. **Communicate constantly.** Announce the objective right up front, assess progress publicly, create a "goal board" that shows a *daily tabulation* toward the goals. Plus, people forget! They'll be all excited for a week and get distracted by other things. Make the incentive out front and promote it.
5. **Structure short and long-range goals together.** Also known as 'graduated' goals, this allows people to reach smaller rewarding steps along the way. This helps build momentum and enthusiasm with a "can do" type attitude that some larger goals can overwhelm.

With a small amount of juggling figures, you'll find that your staff is motivated to reach farther than ever, without undue costly rewards. They're fun, and they promote a sense of creativity, urgency, and sheer teamwork electricity if they're structured right.

Rule Breaking 101

"Once you're tired of an ad, you should pull it."

FALSE: You're far more likely to get tired of an ad before your customers and prospects. As long as it's pulling in leads and sales, leave it alone. Repeating your successes can only increase your profit. Trying to fix what's *not* broken can only damage your bottom line in the long run.

News Flash

The Latest from
ACCA National

ACCA Conference to Focus on
Codes, Energy Efficiency, &
Technology

San Antonio, TX

February 15-17, 2010

ACCA has scheduled a series of workshops focused on Technical Excellence during the 43rd Annual Conference and Indoor Air Expo. The event takes place February 15-17 in San Antonio, Texas.

The technical side of a business is complex and rapidly changing, which is why ACCA has included the Technical Excellence track at the Conference. The track provides information on various topics of interest that will help contractors gain the competitive edge in their markets.

"There is a lot of focus in the HVAC industry on energy efficiency, which changes the technology available and the codes that contractors must follow," said Kevin Holland, ACCA's Senior Vice President of Business Operations and Membership.

For more information on ACCA's 43rd Annual Conference and Indoor Air Expo, and to register, visit www.accaconference.com, call Vickie at 703-824-8856, or contact her via email at vickie.ellis@acca.org.