

Letter from the Executive

By Tom Wessner,

Hello Friends,

It's hard to believe that it's already November. Before you know it, 2010 will be drawing to a close and another year will be long gone.

This year has been tough for many contractors. Between the up and down weather and the equally tumultuous economy, you've had your work cut out for you.

Here at ACCA-WPA, we hope that your ACCA membership has helped make this time a little easier – through the tools available to members, and the encouragement of other contractors like you.

If there's anything else that we can do to help you end the year on a high note, let us know. We're always here to help.

Tom Wessner
ACCA-WPA President

Marketing

Tips for Holiday Success

By Adams Hudson

What is it that makes the holidays special? Sure, there are the lights and festive decorations. There's the chill in the air that bites your face as you hustle from store to store in a buying frenzy. And of course there's the *real* – or at least favorite – highlight of the season: the food. Mountains of it. And let's face it, spending time with the family is a nice change, too.

One thing that's never welcome around the holidays? Try pushy, salesy, or insensitive intrusions of any kind. That's the best way I know to get fast-tracked into the trash pile. We're not planning to leave you high and dry this holiday season, so here are 5 Tips For Holiday Success:

1. **Help someone else.** It's the season of giving, and who needs a boost more than the less fortunate in our communities? One of our clients began campaigning in September – using their newsletter – and to date has raised almost \$8,000 for local children in foster care. Think that makes them heroes around town? Not to mention the massive publicity.
2. **Give gifts.** Your customers give to you all year through purchases and referrals. Take this time to show them you appreciate them, too. Coupons for a free pie or turkey are great options for top purchasing customers. Or if they've been really "good" this year, send them a holiday poinsettia.
3. **Send holiday cards to your customers.** Low-cost Holiday Cards can be sent from Thanksgiving to New Year's, giving your customers a warm-hearted message that expresses appreciation for their business. Send to your entire database, but do not use a sales message or the effect is ruined. These are the #1 Customer Retention pieces during the holidays.
4. **Go the extra mile.** There are always going to be contractors – the vast majority, in fact – who feel that it is enough just to get the job done and go. If you're lucky enough to make it into your customers' home this season, do a little extra. Small things like changing a filter or replacing a bulb for free during a service call go a long way toward permanent good will.
5. **Host an open house or party.** You go into your customers' home constantly, but how often do they get to see where *you* spend your time? Consider an Open House to invite customers and friends. Few things are better than customers coming to you, right? This one might cost you some, but the benefits far outweigh the investment.

Adams Hudson is ACCA's National Marketing Partner. You can request his free marketing ezine and free marketing reports by emailing FreeACCAstuff@hudsonink.com

End-of-the-Year Profit Boosters

The pages of the calendar are turning and, for some folks, that means the calculators are buzzing. Are you going to make your sales goals for the year? What end-of-year profit boosters can you put into place?

First, look for the low-hanging fruit. Follow up on leads that didn't close. Some sales surveys show that 70% of leads aren't followed up on. What a waste.

Remember too, your current customers are the ones most likely to buy your products and services. So how about a customer-only offer? A pretty good theory says that a one-time discount to existing customers is better for business than a discount to new customers. That's because the current customer presumably came in at the regular price and will expect to pay it again in the future, whereas a new customer who comes in at a discounted price will see that as his base price.

Whether you're pursuing existing customers or other parts of your market, direct response offers work well through the start of December – especially so this year since “year-end” can have an impact on your customers' taxes.

Tax credits for energy efficient home improvements are for purchases made in either 2009 or 2010. And since the tax credits end on December 31, 2010, remind your customers and prospects that if they want a tax credit of up to \$1,500, they need to upgrade their home comfort system or energy-efficient water heater before the end of the year. Otherwise, they'll miss out on the extra incentives the government is handing out.

Sharpen the direct response attack by combining offers or highlighting new ones. And how they pay can be a big part of the picture, whether you're talking deferments, monthly payments or “clunker” trade-ins.

Year-round, financing incentives are important to consumers when making big-ticket purchases – and at the holidays, even more so. Make sure your customers and prospects know that you've got financing available and that you'll help them make their home improvement investment as painless as possible.

Make your offers irresistible. And make them time-sensitive. People respond to deadlines – and that sense of loss they want to avoid if they miss the good deal that's theirs for the taking. In other words, help your customers see your offers as their low-hanging fruit. Make it easy to buy, hard to resist and soon to expire.

“I Wonder if ACCA Has That for Me?”

Need affordable training? ACCA has now made more than 100 online training programs available to subscribers of ComfortU. If companies purchase an annual subscription online by September 30 and use the coupon code ONDEMAND during the online checkout process, members will pay just \$524 for a full twelve months of access to ComfortU (www.acca.org/comfortu) for them and their employees.

“That's only around 5 dollars a program just for the existing library,” Kevin Holland said, “and you can expect around 36 new programs to be added over the course of the year.”

Yeah. ACCA has that for you.

SmartWords

“I've always worked very, very hard, and the harder I worked, the luckier I got.”

Alan Bond

Techno Tidbit

Did you know that Dedicated Outdoor Air Systems (DOAS) can control humidity and fresh air within a space? That helps reduce the need for heating or air conditioning. The systems help conserve energy, as well as reduce costs. Check it out at www.constructiondigital.com/industry-focus/building-technologies/factors-driving-innovations-hvac-technology.

ACCA Benefit Highlight

RPA Joins ACCA and IAQA at 2011 Indoor Air Expo

ACCA, the Indoor Air Quality Association, and the Radiant Panel Association have announced that the three organizations will hold their annual meetings at the same time in 2011, and share the Indoor Air Expo. The 2011 Indoor Air Expo will be held February 15-17, 2011 in San Antonio, Texas.

According to Paul T. Stalknecht, ACCA President & CEO, "The Indoor Air Expo has grown significantly since ACCA and IAQA have joined together. Adding RPA just made sense, because we are creating the biggest source of education, networking, and learning opportunities available for all of our members.

The Art of Management

Double Your Money – The Real Cost of Employee Turnover

According to Entrepreneur magazine, 73% of employers surveyed cited employee retention as their number one concern for 2006. And it can cost twice the annual salary of an employee to replace them. So what can you do to keep *your* key employees and ensure that it's business as usual?

1. **Screen applicants thoroughly before hiring.** Make sure that employees "fit" the company, and turnover rate is almost guaranteed to drop drastically.
2. **Offer competitive compensation packages.** Money is no longer the single most important factor employees consider when joining or staying with a company. Healthcare, flexibility, even childcare now play an important role in employee satisfaction.
3. **Challenge employees.** Be sure each of your employees, whether office staff or technicians, is being used to the fullest of their potential.
4. **Give credit where credit is due.** Even the best, most loyal employees like to know that *you* know they're doing a good job. A timely word of recognition boosts morale and performance, which ultimately benefits the *company*.

No one said managing was easy. And with today's workplace serving as a melting pot of personality, culture, and expertise, it can be harder than ever to maintain a productive environment. So make it a little easier on yourself and promote low turnover and high satisfaction among employees. You'll both win big.

Rule Breaking 101

"Being good at what you do means you will be successful."

False: That is the greatest myth in all of contracting. If you're great at what you do and no one knows, how does your talent translate into profits? You *must* get your name out there through any means necessary – including advertising, testimonials, and publicity.

News Flash

The Latest from
ACCA National

FISH: Creating
Accountability Part II
ComfortU

November 16, 2010
2pm Eastern

What does fish have to do with a company? In this webinar we will build on what we learned in our first webinar the "who not the what" by asking ourselves so now I have all the right people, how do you keep them interested in the company's goals, and objectives through 4 specific strategies.

Presenter Jamie Gerdsen will highlight three different business management books in a three part webinar series.

About the Presenter: Jamie Gerdsen is President of Apollo Heating Cooling and Plumbing. He is responsible for overseeing the daily operations of the Company, which has been family, owned and operated since 1910, which celebrates its 100 year anniversary this year. Before joining his family in running Apollo, Jamie gained valuable professional experience at

Z-Tel Communications, an

emerging start up in Tampa, Florida where he was Director of Business Development.

You can learn more about