

best practices

GUIDELINES TO HELP AN INDUSTRY GROW

branding

Devote 2% of your sales to get results

BY RON HALL /
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Most landscape and lawn care business owners like getting their hands dirty. They'd rather be outside than developing a plan to establish their operation as a brand in their marketplace.

Not just for cereals

Branding? It's okay for breakfast cereals, but what does it have to do with Green Industry businesses? Plenty.

Check out TruGreen ChemLawn. Who doesn't recognize its trucks? Its uniformed employees? Its logo?

Maybe you're too busy working on projects and hustling for sales to build a "brand." Shame on you.

Take a long look at your competitors. Is there one that the public immediately recognizes? Why shouldn't that company be yours?

Advertising and marketing — in all of their many forms — aren't branding. They are tools to help you build a brand, so don't think that just because your numbers compare favorably with ALCA's "2001 Operating Cost Study," below, that you're a branding whiz.

The survey says...

The Study, sponsored jointly by ALCA and ANLA, contains averages of financial data gathered from 233 member companies. It reveals that most



Ed LaFlamme says to build your brand.

landscape contractors spend less than one percent of their revenues on advertising and promotion.

That, of course, is not taking into account the cost of all of the other things that go into making a brand, down to the company stationary.

What's the number?

For many years, Ed LaFlamme operated a successful landscape firm in Connecticut. Today, he consults to help other contractors build their operations. He says a company that delivers quality customer service should expect to spend 2% on marketing and advertising, almost double the ALCA study average.

"At two percent, you're bringing in results," LaFlamme said in a recent "Owners' Network" teleconference (www.owners1.com). "You're getting results if you're marketing your company correctly. You'll have a lot of work to choose from."

Sound off

I think your estimates on what an owner should pay himself/herself from the article, "Payday for the Owner," (April LM, page 108) are on the low side, \$60,000 for a \$1 million company. I find that if you price your jobs correctly, avoid lowballing at all costs and watch your budget carefully, you should be able to pay yourself more than what you indicated.

— Marco Goncalves
Clean Cut Lawns
Ossining, NY

Speak your mind

What do you think about our take on branding? E-mail your thoughts to jstahl@advanstar.com.

If we print your comments, we'll mail you a copy of "Spanish Phrases for Landscape Professionals" by Jason Holben and Dominic Arbini. To learn more about this book, call 303/863-1685 or send an e-mail to StockPotSpanish@hotmail.com.

ADVERTISING & PROMOTION (% of net sales)

Typical contractor	0.9
Exterior design/build	1.3
Exterior installation	0.7
Exterior maintenance	1.1

SOURCE: "2001 OPERATING COST STUDY." FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT ALCA AT WWW.ALCA.ORG OR ANLA AT WWW.ANLA.ORG.

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