

# Q HOW DO I MARKET TO PRODUCE A RAINFALL OF LEADS?

BY JONATHAN GOLDHILL

**A** To produce a rainfall of leads in the landscaping business, reengineer your mindset about marketing first; otherwise, you'll never consistently produce enough high-quality leads to grow. Until marketing becomes a process in your business, adding new customers always will be a problem. When marketing becomes a process, it will cease to be a problem because marketing, prospecting and selling aren't any different from accounting, bookkeeping, designing, installing, mowing or providing maintenance services. Each requires a process or a systematic approach to executing it. To produce a virtual rainfall of prospective customers, think like a marketer.

**Stop thinking you're a landscaper.** If you think you're in the landscaping business, hit yourself over the head with a shovel. Think like a marketer and seller of landscape services. You're in the sales and marketing business. The service you market, sell and deliver is landscaping.

**Marketing is like politicking, so start campaigning.** Too many small-business owners market haphazardly. Their marketing is event driven or a short-run campaign. Strategize like you're running a political campaign, only this campaign has no end date, unless you want to go dark during the offseason. Effective marketing requires the mindset of a political strategist. Test, measure and evaluate.

**Marketing is much more analytical than you think.** Management theorists agree you can't manage what you don't measure. If you want to produce a rainfall of leads, experiment, measure and when successful, add water. Your successful marketing programs



should be treated like a sponge. Expand them by spending more, adding more geographical coverage and trying other marketing channels. Above all, measure what's working and what's not by asking your customers when they first call how they heard about you or by putting telephone-tracking software on your pay-per-click and organic search web pages. It's all about return on investment.

**Plug the holes in your bucket.** It's difficult to expand your business if you're losing customers. Calculate

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your attrition rate (the number of customers you lost the past 12 months) and set a goal to reduce that rate by half. Landscape contractors lose customers usually because of poor service relative to price, lack of communication with customers or both. As the old AT&T commercial and slogan read, “Reach out and touch someone.” Don’t let your customers get away. Call, survey or visit them more.

**Think outside the box.** If you’re going to grow larger, faster or be more profitable, think outside the box. Like the Apple slogan says, “Think different.” Peter Drucker, the father of modern management said, “Marketing and innovation produce results. All the rest are costs.” If everyone is doing the same thing and communicating the same message, it’s difficult to determine how to stand out.

When landscape contractors are asked what sets them apart from everyone else, their answers are typically vague. Fewer than one in eight people say something different or infectiously exciting. It may not be true that the other seven don’t have something exciting to say, perhaps they just haven’t honed in on their marketing message with any real differentiation. That’s why contractors should identify and define what’s unique about their business and then embed that message into all their marketing.

**Never the pest, always the “welcome guest.”** Salespeople calling on commercial accounts are usually trying to determine how to get past gatekeepers. I’m often asked to answer that question when speaking to salespeople, but I avoid answering it because it’s the wrong question. Instead, salespeople should be asking: “How can I get sought after and invited in by decision makers?” The answer is to engineer a situation in which you’re invited and welcomed as

an expert. Marketing campaigns that let prospects know you can fix their problems will open up conversations with them more easily.

Here’s the “welcome guest” process briefly: 1). Provide information that grabs their attention, raises their interest level and presells the value of the appointment. 2). Only schedule an appointment after you’ve gained mind-share. This changes the entire sales process if successfully implemented and religiously adhered to. Your time isn’t wasted, administrative time is replaced with valuable face time, closing rates increase and you can

be more selective about who becomes your client.

A similar approach for landscape companies selling to residential accounts is a “pardon our dirt” or “pardon our trucks” letter. This type of mailing, sent to residents in neighborhoods where the company does work, invites neighbors to call the company if the dirt or trucks are in their way. It’s a low-cost method that creates awareness and can land new appointments and new customers.

**Be discovered online.** It’s unbelievable how bad some company’s websites are. When people look for lawn care or landscape services, there’s a solid chance they’re going to search for you online, in the local newspaper or the Yellow Pages. With more people jettisoning the Yellow Pages for the Internet, contractors have to be savvy about online marketing, making their website easily searchable and frequently found. By focusing on this strategy, contractors can rapidly multiply the number of leads streaming into their business every month. If you want to be discovered online, find a reputable or trustworthy marketing company to help you.

**Use testimonials to get referrals and add octane to your marketing.** Testimonials provide a powerful asset in your marketing tool kit. When your customers tell others about the benefits of choosing your company, it makes your sales and marketing efforts more effective. Gather testimonials from customers, and leverage the power of testimonials to get other customers.

The bottom line is that selling is the lifeblood of any business. Along with a properly sustained marketing program, your opportunities for success are much improved. **LM**

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Planning  
pointer

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*Goldhill, head coach of The Goldhill Group, provides strategic business, marketing and sales coaching to owners, managers and salespeople of growing companies in the Green Industry. Reach him or download his free e-book, “The Six Silver Bullets to Growing Any Business Fast,” at [TheGoldhillGroup.com](http://TheGoldhillGroup.com).*