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Maximize Your Marketing Efforts

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Proven ways to help you sell more homes after you make the switch to building systems.

This month I'm going to give you 13 marketing ideas, that if properly executed, will improve your sales results... GUARANTEED! Yes, the devil is in the details, but if you don't take some time to look at your plan you will fail.

Create a marketing/business plan for a 12-month period. Your plan can be simple, but should provide a road map for your marketing. Project the number of homes you want to sell this year and then determine a marketing budget. It should be at least 5% and rarely more than 10% of your gross revenue. Now you know what you can afford to spend. Any plan is dynamic and can change, but revising a plan is better than a knee-jerk reaction.

If you're responding to a strong market and are building speculative homes, make sure you have good Realtor relationships. Realtors often control between 70-85% of home sales in a market. Since most Realtors are occasionally hesitant to sell to-be-built homes, rels are often very good prospects for specs. So make sure you are getting a brochure, e-mail or something into the Realtors hands since they generally control the relo market.

One of the most overlooked and cost effective tools are small 14" x 22" directional signs. These signs are without a doubt the most cost effective marketing tool available. The sign should only have a directional arrow, your company/community name and a product designation (townhomes, single-family homes). That's it, just simple directional information.

If you don't have a website, go out and immediately have one professionally created. The cost ranges from \$3000-\$10,000 depending upon complexity. As many as 70% of all new home searches begin on the web. The three keys to a successful site are: navigational ease, design strength, and upload speed. Don't overdue it and simply get online... it's imperative.

Do not rely on search engines for customer to find your site! Too many builders believe that coming up in the top 10 of a search engine is simple, it's not. Market your URL and utilize portals such as homebuilder.com and newhomesource.com. Prices run as low as \$135 per office a month and these sites will drive you leads.

What candy bar fills you up? What car is the safest? Who delivers pizza in 30 minutes or less? Which chocolate will you give a client, Hershey's or Godiva? Every question adds up to one often overlooked marketing concept: unique selling proposition. You must

understand your USP if you ever expect to increase sales. Your USP is a marketing message that clearly communicates your product's most distinctive and compelling selling point. It will answer the question, "Why should I buy from this builder?"

Create professional advertisements. You must understand that the 18 year old at the local paper may have three ounces of design judgment, but they don't have an ounce of wisdom concerning ad creation or the building business. Your ad may be the only chance you will ever have to attract that potential client. Make sure you understand your USP; state it powerfully in the headline, and reinforce it in subheads and body copy. Tie the graphic to the headline to reinforce and empower the presentation.

Clean up your home sites. Most buyers visit your spec homes when you're not there. So it's very important to put a good face on what they see. Clean up the inside and outside of your homes every Friday so the site doesn't leave you looking shoddy, sloppy and disorganized.

Good site signage is worth every dollar you spend. If your site signs are getting ratty looking, invest some money and get new ones. Once again, these small oversights are glaring clues to prospects about how you do business.

Maintain a consistency in your marketing message. That means the same color, shape, logo, and if you use one, tag line should be used everywhere: trucks, hats, signs, coffee cups, brochures, etc. Inconsistent imagery is never acceptable or necessary. Take the time to create a palette of correct logos, colors and imagery usage. It will pay off in the long run.

If you can't afford a model home, but build spec homes and do the "spec-hop," try these ideas. Arrange a special Realtor event just before settlement with a light lunch so the local agents can get a taste of your construction quality and have an opportunity to meet with you. Make sure you open the home for an open house (without carpet or with additional carpet protection) the week before you settle. Keep a brochure box filled with company literature in an obvious place during construction. Ask the new owners for permission to put a small sign out front that say, "Future Home of Nancy and Jacob Young."

Always get photos of your homes for marketing use, preferably with nice landscaping and after the homeowner has occupied the house. If you do this you should always get a written approval from the homeowner to use the home in ads or brochures.

Good marketing is a series of often-small steps that will help you grow your building business from a mom and pop shop to a successful building business.