

WORK STUDY > OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFIT

MARKETING



DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY TRAINING



WHAT MAKES YOUR BUSINESS SPECIAL?

What is it that you offer that sets your business apart from others?

Who do you want to be your customers?

Does your business meet their needs?

Identify your market!

Understand what your strengths are and what customers you should attract i.e. commercial (sector specific) or residential (a specific culture). You cannot be all things to all people, so understand your customer's priorities, what is it that motivates their buying decisions, and communicate with them appropriately.

Plan

Marketing is not something to do when business is slow; it is an ongoing process that helps to stop business from slowing up!

Ensure you have a plan and that you are driving your business forward. Your plan should detail who you are aiming to contact and with what information i.e. seasonal information sent out throughout the year. This will remind you to tailor your message and target your audience keeping your name at the forefront of their mind for your services.

Remember: You cannot expect one piece of marketing communication alone to build your business. Often it takes many 'opportunities to see' (OTS) a brand before it is actually recognised by a customer and even more to encourage people to change their buying decisions and switch to your company. You must plan your marketing campaigns and follow them up.

Word of mouth

Don't under-estimate the power of referrals. Good news spreads and people will often ask for recommendations from friends before they make buying decisions. Ask your customers to write referrals for your promotional literature and website and to recommend you to their friends.

Remember: Bad news often spreads quicker than good news so deal with customer service issues promptly. Dealing with a problem successfully can often create a positive impression.

Trade Associations

Membership of trade associations show that you are a professional, qualified pest controller. It gives you credibility, promotes your training and puts you on a register from which potential customers can access your details.

Remember: You have worked hard to attain your training so ensure that you promote this. Customers want to know they are in safe hands.



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 'FIRST IMPRESSION'

Have you ever taken a step back and looked at the experience your customers have when dealing with your company?

How can you possibly improve your service if you are not fully aware of what is important to your customers (not what you think is important to them) and how they perceive you.

Taking time to evaluate your business to ensure you are meeting, or even better, exceeding your customers' expectations is vital.

So how do you do this?

Think about your first impression

- Your 'first impression' is not simply your appearance; it is the complete experience. What does your van look like? Is it clean, branded? What will you leave behind – a business card, a professional card on which you can write your quote or post treatment follow-up advice?
- The difference between wearing a professional and if possible branded, clean uniform and turning up in dirty overalls can be the difference between winning a job and losing one. At first your appearance is often all customers can judge you on and if you look professional you will inspire respect and confidence. You could be the most capable pest controller but by neglecting your 'first impression' you will do yourself and business a disservice.
- The appearance of your van is also important. It can be interpreted as an indicator of your work ethic i.e. if you have a clean and tidy van, your work will in turn be clean and tidy. A branded van can often make you appear professional, whilst also promoting your company. However, there are times when customers may prefer you have an unbranded van. It might be worthwhile if you have two vans to consider only branding one or only branding one side of the van so the unbranded side faces the road when you park, providing discretion.
- You do not need to spend a 'king's ransom' on marketing materials but it is important you have a logo which you use consistently. This will establish your 'brand'.
- An easy-to-use website is very important. Increasingly customers make their buying decisions based on online searches. Remember your website should be clean, corporate and recognisable, featuring your branding. Your customers interest is not your own. Customers do not want to know everything about every pest. All they want to know is that you have the experience and expertise to take their problem away.

Your 'last impression' - Think about the things you leave behind.

- What do you write your quote on? How do you tell people the many services you offer? Do you have a business card that has your telephone on it in case the customer should want to contact you again?

Perhaps the most useful thing to do is evaluate your 'first impression' regularly. Find out what is important to your customers and ensure that there are no areas of your business that are letting you down. This can be done by simply asking your customers for feedback or taking a step back and asking yourself 'If a stranger turned up at my door looking like this what would I think?'

10 TIPS FOR BETTER BRANDING

Branding is about more than your company logo; your brand is also how you do business, and is therefore your business identity. You want people to recognise and know your brand, but for all the right reasons.

Here are ten tips for better branding suitable for businesses of all sizes:

1 Keep it simple

A clean and simple logo design is a good place to start. Your logo can just be your company name, but it's good to have a graphic image to go with it. As well as looking professional, a logo helps customers recognise and remember your brand.

2 Complementary fonts and colours

Once you have your logo, pick one or two complementary fonts and colours to use with it. This can be as simple as always using Arial font in black or green on your website, leaflets and business cards.

3 Location is key

You have your logo, now what? You can put your logo on your van, your stationary, your business cards, your leaflets, your clothing, on bait boxes, on your building sign, your website, the possibilities are endless!

4 Don't underestimate the small stuff

Try and reinforce your brand every time you communicate with a customer – use your logo on your email signature, and on your quotes and invoices. Hand out your business card and/or leaflets as much as possible - you never know who might recommend your business.

5 Be consistent

Use the same logo every time, and avoid changing the font or colour, or using more than one logo. Try to stick to your complementary fonts and colours in everything you produce. If you have changed logos, be sure to phase out the old logo, even if it is a slow process.

6 Get everyone on board

Even if there's only one other person in your business, get them involved! Encourage technicians to wear branded clothing and leave behind business cards and leaflets. Office-based staff should be using branded stationary and including business cards and leaflets in all outgoing post.

7 Remember it takes time

Building your brand and creating brand awareness takes time. It might take a while to get branded clothing, a branded van and a website – just do one thing at a time.

8 Stay up to date

Don't let your brand get stale. The information on your leaflets and website should be accurate and relevant, and the content regularly updated. Try a new style or layout once in a while.

9 Use social media carefully

Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are a great way to showcase the personality of your company and interact with customers, but keep your updates professional, relevant and true to your company's values.

10 Use a professional

If you want to try a more graphic logo design, marketing or graphic design agencies can design a logo for you which you will then be free to use as you please. They can also design your website, stationary, leaflets and business cards.



Think of your AUDIENCE & make the story INTERESTING to them!



PR: THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED

PR has a reputation for being big, scary and shrouded in mystery. Promoting your business through PR might seem like an impossible task however, PR is really only another form of communicating with your audience.

Column inches do not fill themselves and journalists do in fact welcome interesting well written articles. The challenge is finding that elusive 'hook' that will transform your story into something that is newsworthy.

Creating the 'hook'

The hook is what makes your message interesting and gets you noticed, for example inspiring, topical or novel stories may grab your interest.

You must think of your audience and make the story interesting to them. Remember your target audience may not share your passion; it is your job to make your message interesting in order to engage them.

Before you start, think about the following...

- Who is the story about? (person/project)
- What will happen/did happen?
- Where, When, Why and How will/did it happen?
- What difference will it make/has it made to the individual, group, community (i.e. added value).

TOP TIPS

- **Send the story in the body of the email** – make things as easy possible for the reporter. Your story is more likely to be read if the reporter does not need to open an attachment.
- **Avoid jargon** – use words that ordinary people will understand.
- **Make sure you don't sound like an advertisement** – it should read like a report in a newspaper.
- **Ensure you get consent** to reference people or use photographs
- **Use good, interesting quotes that sound real**
- **Keep your article concise** – most local newspaper stories are 300–350 words long. Most newsrooms are short-staffed, so if your press release is well written and of this length, it may be printed exactly as you have written it.
- **Provide all the necessary contact details** – the journalist may be on a tight deadline so it is important that the named contact responds quickly to media enquiries.
- **Remember newspaper editors will always cut articles from the bottom** –so get all the main information up front.
- **Think about who you are sending it to and their requirements** i.e.
 - very short and sharp for broadcast
 - longer for local newspapers
 - more technical for trade magazines

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social networking enables you to connect, share and stay in touch with friends, colleagues, customers, suppliers, the local community, and even trade associations and government agencies. You can use social networking sites to post updates, share pictures and videos and talk to contacts. Each social network varies in the type of content you can post and the groups of people you can connect with. Here is our guide to get you started:



Five ways Facebook can help your business

You may use Facebook in your personal life and not give it a second thought, however you can also use it for your business and post updates, including pictures, videos and links to other websites, and connect with customers, suppliers and potential new customers.

1 Create a 'page' for your company

Remember to use an eye-catching profile picture - try using your logo. Your 'banner' is a large image at the top of your page. Using a strongly-branded image of your premises, your team, or your vans creates a professional image.

2 Add a Facebook link to your website

This helps you get more 'traffic' to your Facebook page. You can also add a Facebook link to your email signature and add a Facebook icon to your leaflets and business cards.

3 Get people talking

When people 'like' your Facebook page, your updates appear on their newsfeed. Writing your first post and finding things to say can be daunting. Try posting pest facts, interesting photos of things you've seen on the job, or funny articles about pests in the news. Get the conversation started in your community!

4 Keep up with the competition

Are your competitors using Facebook? Build up a Facebook following before they do!

5 Drive more traffic to your website

As much as possible, link back to your own website on your Facebook posts. Not only will this improve your SEO (search engine optimisation) you might get some new customers too.

Whilst Facebook is a great way to broadcast your updates, a business 'page' does not give you access to a newsfeed to show updates from people you are connected with. If you want to know what your customers are up to, try using Twitter as well.



Five ways Twitter can help your business

Unlike Facebook, all Twitter accounts work in the same way whether it's personal or business. You post 'tweets', limited to 140 characters, and on your Twitter 'feed' you can see tweets from people you follow.

1 Set up a Twitter account

Your Twitter account should be your business name so people can easily find you, eg. @Killgerm. You can set your name to something more personal, eg. Dave@Killgerm.

2 Get tweeting and join in the conversation

You can follow and send tweets to local businesses, fellow pest controllers, local authorities, trade associations, government agencies, anyone who can help your business and keep you informed! As well as joining in conversations you can 'retweet', which means that you share someone else's updates with your own followers.

3 Keep it simple

You are limited to 140 characters, so keep your updates short, snappy and to the point.

4 What's trending right now?

When the hashtag symbol - # - is used in tweets before a key word, it categories the tweet and helps it show up in searches. For example, you could add #pestcontrol to your tweets. Hashtagged words which become very popular become 'trending' topics. If you see a hashtag on someone's tweet, such as #pestcontrol, clicking on the hashtag will bring up all tweets containing that hashtag.

5 Add the Twitter logo to your website

As with Facebook, adding the Twitter logo to your website, business cards and leaflets will increase your 'followers' and improve your SEO.

There are many other social media sites that can be useful for your business. Understanding what is available and choosing which works best for you is the key.





Five ways Google+ can help your business

Google Search is without doubt the largest single source of information and Google+ promises to become the ultimate tool for social engaging and sharing.

1 Google My Business

Google My Business is by far the most important Google+ feature, especially if your business has a local presence. Not only can a Google+ business listing increase your visibility on local and mobile search, but it also allows potential customers to call you, get directions to your business on Google Maps and check out your verified business website.

2 Get started with circles

Once you have set up a profile with your picture and details, you can ensure the right messages are delivered to the right people using 'circles'. You can easily divide your contacts into appropriate categories such as family, friends, colleagues, domestic customers, etc.

3 Be part of the community

Join public communities around shared interests, or create private communities to get together with just the right people.

4 Let's hang out

A hangout is a free group video chat focusing on 'face-to-face-to-face' group interaction offering the perfect opportunity to put a human face to your company. You can chat with up to 9 locations at a time. Hangouts are fantastic for conducting customer testimonial videos, sharing industry knowledge and giving a behind-the-scenes look at your company through an online tour.

5 Sparks and shares

You can search for interesting news to share about particular topics in the 'sparks' section. These are customised news and blog feeds tailored to your interests. You can set up a spark for 'pests' which will always show up on your page. You can share useful and interesting content with your network using 'shares'.



Five great hints and tips to promote your business on LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the leading social networking platform solely dedicated to business professionals. But how can you use this platform to promote your business and yourself?

1 Create a company page

To get started you need to create your company page. This simply requires your company name and email address. Add your company logo and description, not forgetting to mention what makes your business unique and stand out from your competitors. Being a part on the LinkedIn network shows your customers that you're professionally minded.

2 Involve your team

A great way to increase your visibility on LinkedIn is to encourage your team to keep their profiles up-to-date and like and share your company's posts and profile. The ultimate goal is for people to start connecting and talking about your company.

3 Post often

Posting updates is the most effective way to start a conversation and buzz about your business. Share your company achievements, include images and videos to give your posts visual impact. Also you should try to include a link back to your website to further drive traffic.

4 Write smart

When writing your posts for LinkedIn treat it just like you would your company website. By using the same tone and keywords as you would on your website you emphasise to your customers what your companies specialises in and does well.

5 Utilise your personal page

There are many ways to promote your business further through your personal profile as well. You can endorse your connections which mean that you approve of, or acknowledge their skills or abilities. You can also write recommendations for your connections. This is a great way for you to showcase your business and your long standing connections within the industry.



Five key points on social networking etiquette -

1 Feeling unsure?

There are lots of resources on the web about social media and how to use it, and social media courses are run all over the country.

2 Keep it relevant

Post interesting, relevant content and don't spam your followers.

3 Mind your manners

Don't post anything online you wouldn't say or do in real life.

4 Negative comments can and do happen

Don't get into a comments war - respond once then address the issue offline.

5 Respect people's privacy

Always get permission if your posts or pictures involve your customers

WHAT MAKES A GOOD WEBSITE?

The web has transformed our life. It is often the way in which we search for items and heavily influences our buying decisions. It is now critical that you have a website that is both easy to navigate and engaging. From viewing your website customers will get an overall impression of who you are as a company and therefore the level of service they will receive.

DOS...

- Keep your design clean and your images professional
- Text should be relevant and concise
- Use words that customers will use to search for pest control in your homepage text
- Make sure your navigation is visible and easy-to-use
- Have an online form rather than an email address on your website. This will prevent spam to your email account and ensure you capture the information you need
- Link to your company social media pages and link your social media pages back to your website. This will improve your search engine rankings and engage your customers
- Showcase your company – if you have branded uniforms or vans. Pictures of these will add personality and look professional. If you also offer a discreet service you can promote this
- Ensure your qualifications can be seen
- Keep your content fresh – updating your website will help your search engine rankings and engage your audience
- Your website MUST have responsive web design so that it conforms with all user platforms i.e. tablets, phones etc.
- Make sure your content has been proof read. Whilst text can easily be changed, badly written or misspelt text can be very off-putting and confusing
- Use credible testimonials

DON'TS...

- Use lots of text
- Remember your audience do not want to see lots of pests, this is the reason they are contacting you. Pests are your passion, not theirs
- Your customers do not need to know everything about every pest. Detailed pest biology is irrelevant to them
- Use music on your website
- Have videos upload automatically, this can slow the website. Users should be able to click play on videos themselves



Five ways a Blog can help your business

There are many reasons to not blog – time poor, don't know what to write or don't know how to start – but if you can, you should. Blogs have been proven to significantly improve website visibility and in turn sales; promoting your skills and expertise in a way that no other tool can.

- 1 Your blog should be hosted on your company website to help increase search engine traffic. In short the more content/blog posts, the more web pages become indexed in search engines in order to improve search visibility and thereby increase traffic to your website.
- 2 A blog allows you to humanize your brand more than any website content. It allows you to individually target specific concerns customers have whilst showcasing both your expertise and personality.
- 3 A regularly updated blog can reflect your approach to business. If you maintain your blog with high-quality, fresh content the business can seem efficient, proactive and successful.
- 4 It helps attract less specific web searches. Whilst a search for e.g. 'company name, location' may find your website, a search for e.g. 'wasps in roof space' is unlikely to find you unless your content specifically covers this query. The more interesting content/blog posts will help customers find you, improving your SEO whilst attracting links from other sources that might share your content in their articles.
- 5 Blogs support your social media activity providing you with original, relevant content which is interesting and directs traffic to your website rather than re-sharing existing posts which will lead your customers to other websites e.g. news stories.



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