**Marketing Ideas for Onsite Professionals – Part 2**

The first column of this 3-part series on marketing tactics concentrated on ways your company can promote itself online. This column focuses on some of the many ways companies can reach customers using more traditional channels.

It’s important to note that the ideas in this series are more like an a la carte menu than an all-you-can-eat buffet. Your time is limited and so are the financial resources you are able to dedicate to marketing your business. That’s why it’s so important that you have a marketing plan – it will help to ensure that you make the most effective use of your time, energy and money.

**Direct Mail.** Direct mail can be a very effective way to get business, but it is expensive, so it's important to do it well. Unless you happen to have direct mail experience in your background, it’s often a good idea to leave the development of your campaign to someone who does. Your most important role actually is ensuring you have the best mailing list possible. The Postal Service’s website, [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com) has a lot of good resources to help you identify mailing lists, and there are list brokers who can also assist here, but don’t forget to check into what might be available from local public agencies – health departments and others. Also ask your distributors or the manufacturers you represent if they can support you.

Another approach to consider, especially if the area you serve consists mostly of onsite systems, is to use a mailing service such as Valpak, MoneyMailer or Red Plum. These services put ads from multiple companies in a single envelope which is delivered to a geographically specific region. One more option is Every Door Direct Mail from the US Postal Service. From their website you can create your direct mail piece, identify your list and send out your mailing. It's not for everyone -- for this to be cost effective, the area you serve probably needs to be primarily served by onsite systems and needs to align fairly closely with the USPS zip code schemes.

**Be an expert.** Contribute articles to local news outlets which might help homeowners better understand their systems. Get to know local editors, radio and tv producers and make sure they know you are willing to be a source for septic system information. They will almost certainly put you in their rolodex. Also, don't forget online sources of news such as patch.com and online versions of printed newspapers. Consider offering consumer training sessions at health fairs and community events. Offer to go to local schools to educate children on potty do's and don'ts. You might even wish to write a blog for your website. The point is to be as visible as possible within the community. The more places homeowners see you, the more likely your company will be top-of-mind when they are looking for septic systems related services.

**Use free press.** You will probably be surprised at the number of newspapers which serve the area you serve. Many of them will run press releases about your company verbatim. Don't overlook this free advertising for your business. Keep an eye open for milestones or other important activities or events related to your business – new location, 100th system installed, new service added, awards received, etc. – and send out a 2-3 paragraph release.

**Business networking groups.** These "clubs" can be very effective in getting strong leads for new business. Business Network International is perhaps the best known and one of the most effective of these clubs. They have local chapters all over the country, each consisting of local businesses that share your customer base – people like electricians, painters, realtors, insurance agents, etc. The point of BNI chapters is to business networking and referrals. You are expected to share leads you learn about and you can expect to get leads from others in the group. The cost to belong is not cheap -- around $500 per year -- but many small businesses swear by this tactic.

**Fairs and other events.** Meeting potential customers one on one through a display at a county fair, local festival, health department event and the like can be an effective tactic for gaining new business. With a bit of digging, chances are good that you can identify events most weekends in the Spring, Summer and Fall. Invest in a tabletop display or some other type of graphics which communicate your business professionally.

More marketing ideas to come in Part 3.

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