

Finding a vendor

How do you find a vendor? It is important to know this because it can inform marketing. Depending on what I am looking for, I used Google, LinkedIn, listing services, reviews or Twitter. I am sure you use other tools (and would appreciate your insights in the comments).

For example, yesterday I was searching for a freelance editor. I used Google, and found (remarkably) few individuals had websites, whether I searched for “DC freelance editor” or “Maryland freelance editor.” I did find a couple, and one of them, had a very nice website and clearly defined rates. I searched for her on LinkedIn, and discovered that her background was very technical—no editorial. Made me think twice about her skill set. Another one had very strong writing credentials, but absolutely no social media (and she explained she is not into it). It made me question whether she gets it. I also Tweeted it out, and got a response from a colleague (good word of mouth). But, no freelance editors even picked up on it. Obviously, not using Twitter search to find business.

Tool: Google

Marketing lesson: Websites are important. Google profiles are helpful. If you are in an industry that is reviewed, having positive reviews is important since Google finds results from Yelp and others.

Tool: LinkedIn

Marketing lesson: If you aren't on LinkedIn, you are at a disadvantage. The quality of your profile (both for individuals and companies) is important. For individuals, testimonials, number of connections and your background do matter. Don't make stuff up, but bone up what is there.

Tool: Twitter (or other social media sites)

Marketing lesson: How you present yourself, and even if you are on social media, says a lot. What does your Twitter profile, stream, followers say about your business or you?

Tool: Printed materials (brochures, business cards, etc.)

Marketing lesson: How your marketing materials look (are they printed on quality stock, are they black/white or color, do they look professionally designed), can give an immediate impression. How your marketing materials read—what information you provide—can seal the deal.

Tool: Using the telephone

Marketing lesson: Are you reachable? How do you/your company answer the phone? Do you even answer the phone? Some people will want to talk to someone in real time.

Tool: Word of mouth

Marketing lesson: Each and every customer who has a positive interaction with you can be an ambassador, and each and every customer who has a negative impression can be a detractor. Watch your customer interactions. Improve your customer service.

The bottom line is that if you are marketing yourself/your company, you have to understand how people find you, and how they decide whether to contact you or not.

Your thoughts? What makes you decide on a vendor? How do you find a vendor?