

Check for accuracy STAT

The other night, I heard a loud, scratching noise in my chimney. It sounded as if an animal had gotten in. My first thought (and fear) was that a small bat was in there and it would then come into the house. Since it was close to midnight, there was nothing I could do except check the website for the local animal trapping company that I've seen working in my neighborhood. According to Google results, their office opened at 7:00 a.m. The website listed an 800 number, and four local-area numbers. I decided to call first thing to see if they would send someone right away.

At 7:00 the next morning I called up the company. I got a message saying their offices opened at 8:00 a.m. Their Google My Business listing was wrong and their website did not list hours at all.

Sometimes companies spend more time and money on developing new marketing or on sales pitches, and they forget to check the basics. So, before you do anything else marketing-related, check your current stuff for accuracy. Do it now. Seriously.

What to check:

- Business name (is it complete, spelled correctly?)
- Address/es (accurate, current?)
- Telephone number/s (accurate, current?)
- Website URL
- Hours/days of operation
- Staff names/positions/contact information
- Email addresses
- Pricing information

Where to check:

- Your website
 - Your social media pages (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.)
 - Google results/Google maps/Google My Business
 - Yelp and other review or listing sites (e.g., Angie's List) you appear in
 - Printed materials (business cards, brochures, letterhead, postcards, etc.)
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In the end, I was able to get the animal trapping company to come to my house later in the day. They checked the chimney and nothing was there (thank goodness!). They put some mesh on the chimney cap to prevent bats or birds from getting in.

This company has plenty of business around here. I've seen their trucks before as squirrels are constantly getting into attics (and bats are always in the belfry). They certainly have developed brand recognition. But you only call them when you need them and it is usually an urgent situation. Having multiple phone numbers and inaccurate hours is not helpful for anybody needing their services.

Any organization needs to consider what information potential users/customers/donors need to have, and then make sure that information is easily *available and accurate*. It just makes good marketing/communications sense.

5 easy and effective marketing tips for service providers

If you are a service provider, you are probably really good at what you do. You are probably not so good at promoting yourself. If, on the other hand, you are good at what you do and you know how to market yourself properly, you will have business coming out of your ears.

I know because I deal with service providers—and I am one myself. Our first order of business should be to provide the best service possible. But our second order of business, and in order to keep business, is to market ourselves properly.

Here are five easy and effective marketing tips:

1. **Be ultra-professional.** It should go without saying, but the most important thing a service provider can do is to provide good service and a good impression.

- **Be on time.** Punctuality shows respect for your customer's time.
- **Honor your commitments.** If you say you will do something, you must do it!
- **Be straightforward.** Is there an issue? Speak up.
- **Communicate** what, how, why of what you are doing.

2. **Introduce yourself properly.** When meeting with a customer, do not assume they know who you are. You don't have to provide your complete bio, but you should give your name and what you do. For example: "Hi, I am Joe Smith. I am an AC tech with XYZ company and I will be checking your system today." Or: "Hi, I am Gina, I will be teaching this beginner-level yoga class. "

3. **Provide a leave-behind or take-with.** It could be a brochure

or a business card. It would be best if your materials have your website address and your website is good and up-to-date. You want to give the customer a way to contact you and to find out more about you.

4. Send a welcome/thank you letter, card or email. After you meet or provide service to your customer, send something! If you are an art studio, for example, and you just signed up a new art student, send the student a welcome note and any information the student might need. If you are a painter, and just finished painting your customer's house, send a thank you for your business card or email.

5. Ask for referrals. You should have a way to ask for referrals. You could simply have a line in your thank you letter saying that you appreciate referrals. You could provide a discount or a freebie for any referrals. For example, A teacher at the yoga studio I just started going to announced that if you bring a friend to the studio, you get a free class (mind you, the owner of the studio has done none of the steps above including not providing the bring-a-friend information).

These tips are meant to be the basic, everyday things you do for every customer, every time. If you skip these steps, or only do one of them, you will miss out on simple opportunities that are already available to you.

Would you add anything? If you are a service provider, what is your must-do marketing tip? Please share!

Coming up on Thursday, week 2 of the summer challenge.