Marketing lessons from an A+ plumber

As a homeowner, I have dealt with dozens of contractors to perform repairs and inspections, and all the other things one needs to get done in a house. One stands out—my plumber Mark. Not only is he a good plumber, he's a nice guy. I think we can learn a whole lot about marketing from him.

Choose your target market carefully: Mark has decided exactly where he is most comfortable working, geographically and culturally. He knows also what he is NOT looking for.

Advertise to the target market only: Mark does not have a sign on his truck, and he does not run ads in the mass media. He wants to continue working with his target market and not with just anyone.

Distinguish yourself from the competition: In Mark's case, he is green (although not certified) and he prides himself on punctuality. These are two things he highlights in his marketing materials.

Love what you do and be good at it: Mark loves plumbing and has since he was a child. He also knows what he is doing.

Be professional and responsive: Mark responds to inquiries quickly. He asks for pictures of the repair that needs to get done so he can properly assess and estimate the job.

Be pleasant and respectful: People like to do business with people they like. Mark always shakes hands with you when he comes to your house, and he immediately dons booties to prevent tracking dirt into your house. (something most contractors don't even think about). Mark also leaves his work area spotless. No messes to clean up.

In the end, Mark wins at marketing because he has figured out how to market to a niche audience, to provide exemplary service that generates return business and referrals and he doesn’t waste his marketing dollar reaching out to people outside his market.