

IN THE TRADES

# The Ultimate Marketing Guide

Insider tips, tricks and checklists to learn the latest brand-building strategies to attract and retain customers.



# The Ultimate Marketing Guide for the Trades

Business owners in the trades wear more than just a hard-hat every day. There's the customer service hat, supply chain hat, hiring hat ... you get the picture. To keep your business afloat — first and foremost — you must be able to reach and connect with customers. That's where a well-executed marketing strategy comes in.

Marketing starts well before any customer interactions. Part of marketing is building a brand your targeted audience recognizes. Then you attract new customers. And finally, you retain those customers. This works in a cyclical fashion, bringing you more potential customers, boosting sales and positively affecting your bottom line.

But make no mistake: How well you execute your marketing efforts can mean the difference between your business's success and failure. Here's how to do it right.



*There are more than **2.5 million home services businesses** in the U.S. How do you stand out?*

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# 01

## Building Your Brand

Your brand is what sets you apart from the competition. But in a crowded marketplace like the home services industry, it can be challenging to stand out.

If you can successfully become a well-known brand in your local area, you'll have an easier time attracting new customers and retaining existing ones. And while sometimes the perception of others is difficult to control, much of your branding is in your hands. Use the following steps to help you build a brand worth knowing.



# Spend Time on Strategy

Why do people know the difference between Sherwin-Williams and Behr when they're in the paint aisle at the hardware store? The answer is mostly because of branding and reputation.

If you're not sure how to get started on defining your brand, begin with brainstorming. Ask yourself questions like:

- How do we want customers to feel about our services?
- What do we want people to say about our business?
- What are our top three values?
- Who is our target customer? What are their needs?

If you have employees, ask them to help define your brand. They might be able to identify opportunities or blind spots. You might be surprised how helpful it can be to collaborate on a branding strategy with those you trust.

Once you know the brand and image you want to portray, you can then begin to understand where gaps in your marketing strategy exist and form a plan to help your customers understand and connect with your brand directly.

“ *Having a unified brand message can **increase profits by 25%**.*  
~Forbes

## Helpful Tip:

Never miss a branding moment. Print logo gear for your crew, such as hats, shirts, smartphone cases and more.

# Research Your Target Market

Once you're clear on what you want your brand to stand for, make sure your strategy aligns with the people you intend to serve.

There are a variety of ways to gather target market data. You can look at industry studies covering other similar regions, or even opt for a traditional survey approach.

Although surveys can be tedious and difficult to conduct, they add value when it comes to understanding your target market. For instance, if you run a painting business, you need to know the dominant types of projects customers in your area hire for. Interior or exterior? One room or the entire house? All these data points give you the opportunity to cater your services to what potential clients need.

If you plan to collect data in person, bring business cards that offer a promotional rate for those who answer your questions. You also can use social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook to survey individuals online.



## Bonus: Free Online Tools!

To save you countless hours of trial and error, these free online tools can help you get inside the mind of your ideal customer:

1. **Ahrefs Keyword Generator:** Discover the keywords your audience is searching for around topics relevant to your business.
2. **Hotjar:** Understand how visitors behave on your website.
3. **Google Trends:** Keep up with the latest trending searches and topics of interest in your industry.
4. **GummySearch:** Discover the types of conversations your audience is having on Reddit.
5. **SparkToro:** Learn about the sites your target audience visits and the type of content they engage with.
6. **Userbrain:** Run user tests to understand how users interact with your website.

## Understand Your Competitors

After you understand what your target audience is looking for, get acquainted with the services the competition offers. Check out their websites. Read their reviews on Google and Yelp. Identify any service gap opportunities or ways your business can stand apart from them.

It's also important to get an idea of pricing in the areas you plan to serve. You want to be competitively priced, so the more clarity you can get around what your competitors charge, the better you can position your business.

## Hire the Right People

At the heart of a plumbing business, for instance, you need to be a great plumber. But exhibiting strong technical skills isn't enough to uphold a brand's image. You need to hire people you can trust to provide the level of care and service your customers deserve.

After all, you're not the only one who represents your brand. Every one of your employees will become the face of your brand in public.

Believe it or not, hiring and branding have a two-way relationship. The people you hire affect your brand, but your brand will also affect the people you hire. By investing in quality branding, you're **three times more likely** to make a quality hire.

**66 75%** of job candidates  
research a company's  
reputation before they apply.  
~Forbes



## Building Your Brand Checklist

- Have a unified brand message. Ask yourself questions like:
  - How do we want customers to feel about our services?
  - What do we want people to say about our business?
  - What are our top 3 values or pillars?
  - Who is our target customer? What are their needs?
- Get your crew involved in defining your brand to identify opportunities or blind spots.
- Identify where branding gaps exist and form a plan connect with your customers in new ways, deliver your brand message clearly, and continue building long-lasting relationships with your users.
- Gather data on your target market.
  - Look at industry studies or opt for a traditional survey approach.
  - Collect data in person.
  - Use social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook to survey individuals in different location-based groups online.
- Leverage free online tools to get inside the mind of your ideal customer.
- Get acquainted with the services the competition is offering.
  - Check out their websites to see how they present themselves.
  - Read reviews on Google and Yelp to identify any service gap opportunities.
- To be competitive, get an idea of pricing in the areas you plan to serve.
- Hire people you can trust to provide the level of care and service your customers deserve.



# 02

## Attracting New Customers



Whether you're just starting your business or you've been operational for years, attracting new customers is critical. Some businesses in the trades will get plenty of repeat customers, and others won't.

As an example, a plumber could visit one house multiple times to help with clogged drains or stubborn pipes over the course of a year. While a painter, on the other hand, will probably only paint the outside of a home once every decade or so.

Either way, building a client pool helps you grow the business, pay your employees and offer your services to more people.

Today more than ever, it's easy to reach a large audience thanks to the internet. But the digital marketplace is crowded. People can simply use a search engine like Google to search "HVAC near me," and they'll immediately get a list of multiple providers with ratings, reviews and contact information.

But you can play that game too. Here's how to build a digital footprint that attracts customers, generates referrals and helps you land word-of-mouth opportunities

# Go Digital

According to Renolon, **64% of small businesses** have a website. But since today's business landscape relies on digital interactions, that number really should be closer to 100%.

Websites help make the customer experience a breeze from the very start. **Eighty-one percent of shoppers** conduct research online prior to making purchases. Businesses without a website will miss out on sales and lose credibility.

But does the idea of building a website overwhelm you? Then hire a professional. Working with an expert to build your website doesn't have to be expensive. And doing so will ensure it meets your competition's benchmarks, or even exceed them.

Good first impressions, a speedy loading time, easy user experience and a smooth design are all imperative.

“ *It only takes people **less than a second** on your website to decide if they'll stay.*  
~Taylor & Francis Group

## Helpful Tip:

Embrace social media and connect with customers by creating engaging and valuable content that resonates with your audience.

# Boost Your SEO

Search engine optimization (SEO) refers to the practice of writing website content in a way that increases traffic from search engines. SEO also can include improvements you make to your website's user experience, so your pages appear higher in search engine results.

If a person searches for "electrician in Los Angeles," a list of Los Angeles-based electricians whose websites are optimized for search will be returned in the results. These results are called organic search results. Businesses with a strong local, organic presence will often be the top results.

Some of the most important factors in organically ranking for local searches are:

- Maintaining a current Google Business Profile. It's free to get listed.
- Having other quality websites linking to yours (these are called backlinks).
- Earning customer reviews with good ratings (ideally 4.0 or higher).

You can start with some organic marketing basics by conducting keyword research. Then use those phrases throughout your website and make sure site visitors come

away with something of value for having visited — whether it's education, a discount or simply an appointment. Think about what your customers' needs are and address those by explicitly addressing them on your site.

A great way to continuously provide value to website visitors is with a blog or news section. While blog content may not immediately result in sales or customer calls, these articles can educate your customers and build your brand as a subject matter expert.

You can create content at any given time to speak to trends or showcase projects. You'll build a wealth of helpful content that translates to improved rankings in search results, better word-of-mouth marketing and increased customer loyalty as well.

“ **More than 50% of “near me” searches will lead to an in-person visit.** ~Safari Digital

# Use Social Media

Social media includes networks such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and more. These online communities provide ways to reach new clients, encourage engagement and establish your brand identity.

Businesses large and small invest time and money in social media, and it can pay off handsomely.

Social media can help you reach new customers and generate sales. Some people are able to make money through social media by forming advertising deals based on how many followers they gain. These are called influencers.

On YouTube, you can pull in ad revenue based on how many times your video is watched. The more popular your videos are, the more lucrative the platform can be. Advertisers will want to be affiliated with you.

And home services providers most definitely can get in on the action. If you're an electrician who creates how-to videos that have a good following, there's a chance the companies behind the products you use on the job might want to strike a promotion deal.

So, try to use social media as another way (aside from your website) to offer value. Show behind-the-scenes videos of how your projects are done or share a DIY trick people might not know.

Easy fixes for a leaky pipe or a toilet that won't stop running are great value-adds. The more of an expert you're perceived to be, the more likely people will turn to your business services when they're ready to buy.

“ Internet users spend, on average, 142 minutes per day on social networking and messaging platforms. ~*Small Biz Genius*

# Get Involved in Your Community

It's easy to get wrapped up in all things digital, but don't miss out on the power of human connection. Your customers are real people with homes, families, lives and senses of humor. The power of human connection is incredible.

Try sponsoring a youth sports team or a 5K race in your town to get your brand name out. But also go out and make connections.

Spend time at charity events, networking opportunities and community gatherings. This allows you to position yourself as an integral part of the community while you build relationships.

## **Gain Competitive Advantage**

By getting out in the community, you can get a leg up on your less-than-involved competitors. And because customers prefer doing business with companies they trust, being present can lead to more business for you.

# Invest in Advertising

Ads costs money, but you can't be afraid to spend. You can use several different advertising channels including TV, radio, print, billboard or digital. Today, digital marketing is one of the most effective and rewarding types of marketing available to small businesses.

Email marketing offer exponentially greater returns on the dollars invested. But content marketing is 62% less expensive than email marketing and can provide up to three times as many leads, according to marketer association DemandMetric. Both are great options.

You also can opt for digital-based paid advertising strategies like pay-per-click (known as PPC), where you only pay for the number of times your ad was clicked on. This type of advertising is usually done through search engines and offers you the opportunity to bid as high or as low as you want for certain spots on the engine's results page.



## Attracting New Customers Checklist

- Maintain a company website that loads fast, offers an easy user experience and has a user-friendly design.
- Maintain an optimized Google Business Profile.
- Earn strong, quality backlinks (i.e., links from other websites pointing to yours).
- Ask customers to provide reviews with good ratings (ideally 4.0 or higher for best impact).
- Conduct keyword research and then use those phrases throughout your website.
- Start a blog or news section on your website to provide customers educational content and build your reputation as a subject matter expert.
- Frequently create content that speaks to trends, showcases projects and builds a wealth of helpful content. That will translate to higher search result rankings.
- Use social media to reach new clients, encourage engagement and establish your brand identity.
- Use social media to show behind-the-scenes videos and DIY tricks; demonstrate your experience.
- Get involved with your community to establish connections.
  - Sponsor a youth sports team or a 5K race in your town to publicize your brand name.
  - Spend time at charity events, networking opportunities and community gatherings.
  - Start email marketing.
- Start content marketing.
- Opt for more traditional paid advertising strategies like PPC, where you only pay for the number of times your ad was clicked on.

# 03

## Retaining Current Customers



Securing customer loyalty is invaluable. In fact, 65% of a company's business come from returning customers.

Once you have a customer, don't let them go. Boosting your customer retention rates by just 5% can increase your profits anywhere from 25% to 95%. It's easy to get caught up on focusing your efforts on customer acquisition, but don't lose sight of your existing customers' value.

Try the following strategies to improve your customer acquisition efforts.

**“ 82%** of businesses agree customer retention is cheaper than customer acquisition.  
~SmallBizGenius

# Consistently Analyze Metrics

To understand what's working, you need to measure it. When you conduct any type of marketing campaign, analyze its impact so you can determine if it's worth continuing or not.

Did people open your latest email? Did they click on a link? How many asked for a quote or made a purchase? The more you look at the numbers to see how your customers respond to your marketing efforts, the better you can cater to their needs.

## Helpful Tip:

Look for patterns and correlations in your data to identify insights and opportunities for improvement. Monitor trends over time and compare them to industry standards.

# Create Targeted Campaigns

As customers make purchases, follow you on social or join your newsletter, they can quickly feel like they're just a number. By creating targeted ad campaigns, you can help remind them that you see them as a person — not a number. Email is a great way to do this.

You might offer a discount off their next purchase if they spend a certain amount on their first project. Or, for example, you might offer a free service to households with teachers in honor of Teachers Appreciation Month.



# Stay Active in Digital Spaces

Online platforms like Facebook and Twitter give you the opportunity to connect with customers at any time. You can find many different groups on these platforms that exist within your industry. Spend time answering questions, participating in discussions, and connecting with old and new customers alike.

For instance, you can host “ask the plumber” sessions in a home improvement group, where people can comment questions and you can answer them. If someone has a specific question that might not apply to everyone, consider responding with a quick answer online and then privately offer to set up a consultation.

Not only do these digital spaces provide a place for you to connect with current customers, but there are plenty of leads to be found as well. The digital world is your oyster. Facebook is a good space to stay active as users can communicate directly with your page, and you can answer them there. Even large, well-established businesses use this method to connect with current customers and boost retention rates.

Often referred to as community marketing, this method involves you, as a business owner, connecting with potential customers in their social communities. This is typically more affordable than traditional marketing. All it takes is your time and knowledge. You can even build loyal customers that could refer their friends to you.

## Helpful Tip:

Use email marketing to stay in touch with customers and keep them in the loop on new products, services and company news.

# Keep Up with Trends

Are new tools or styles gaining popularity in your industry? If so, you should be well-versed on these to keep up with customer demand. If you offer landscaping services, research what people ask for. Is there a new type of paver flying off store shelves? Are people raving about a modern sprinkler system?

Just like any business needs to keep up with industry trends, it's no different for home service providers. Have you explored any online publications about the latest interior and exterior styles? Are you staying connected in forums for your field? Do you have regular conversations with your peers?

When it comes to retaining customers, you have to be able to send the message in your marketing efforts that the services you provide are top-notch. Have you explored any online publications about the latest interior and exterior styles? Are you staying connected in forums for your field? Do you have regular conversations with your peers?

Some fields are rapidly growing, such as solar. The changes in technology are often the result of advancements in the industry, and customers expect solar professionals to offer the newest and best services. The customers that worked with you a few years ago might come back to seek new technologies or services, but you have to offer those advanced services and market them.

Marketing is a way to communicate your business offerings, so the foundation of any marketing effort starts with the value you can bring to customers.

## **Helpful Tip:**

Follow industry thought leaders on social media and subscribe to relevant blogs and newsletters.

# Consider Automation

Retaining customers will require your team to continue performing their jobs at a high level, all despite industry changes. At times, it can feel impossible to keep up with everything, but automation and digital tools can be a lifesaver.

You can automate marketing touchpoints such as emails or surveys, but you can also automate how you track marketing campaigns, monitor the success of different outreach channels, and more.

Instead of compiling marketing analytics or performing other tedious tasks, consider automating them so your business can focus on what it does best.

“ **65%** of workers say they have less stress when they can use automation tools to do some parts of their job.

*~Small Business Trends*



## Retaining Customers Checklist

- Measure and analyze your marketing campaigns to determine what's worth continuing and what isn't.
- Create targeted ad campaigns to remind customers you see them as a person—not a number.
- Entice customers to spend by offering deals. Examples:
  - A discount off their next purchase if they spend a certain amount on their first project.
  - A complimentary service to a teacher's house in honor of Teachers Appreciation Month.
- Connect with current customers on Twitter or in home improvement groups by hosting "Ask me anything" sessions to build long-lasting relationships.
- Stay on top of industry trends and keep up with customer demand so that you can offer and market the best services in your field.
- Consider automating marketing tasks that can be done without human interaction such as analytics or email outreach.
- Connect with customers in home improvement groups by hosting "Ask me anything" sessions.
- Stay on top of industry trends and keep up with customer demand by doing the following:
  - Explore online publications about the latest interior and exterior styles.
  - Stay connected in forums for your field.
  - Have regular conversations with your peers.
- Conduct formal training for your team about new technology and systems as some require certifications.
- To free up staff time, consider how to automate manual tasks such as emails or surveys.

# Marketing Sets Your Trades Business Apart

If you're not marketing your home services business properly, not only will you miss out on reaching new customers, but your existing customers will take their business elsewhere. Sales could plummet.

The success of your business — no matter what service you sell — hinges on your ability to properly market what the business has to offer.

At a high level, focus on building your brand, attracting new customers, and retaining your current customers. Go deep into each of those categories. Figure out what you're doing well and use our checklists to start improving on the areas that need it.

To learn how Thryv's Marketing Center helps small businesses just like yours attract and retain customers, visit [Thryv.com](https://Thryv.com).

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