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LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT'S RESOURCE FOR LANDSCAPE CONTRACTORS, LAWN CARE PROS & GROUNDS MANAGERS

Power up your direct mail and buckle up for client response

Everyone claims to be the best landscaper in town, so it's time to get ahead of your competition with great resources like direct mail marketing strategies. Perfect for expanding your customer base, direct mail will do the marketing for you while you create a garden of architectural masterpieces.

To promote your business properly, you must develop a successful marketing and advertising strategy that is flexible enough to publicize the benefits of seasonal pre-planning while promoting your annualized business. One way to achieve this is through the different avenues of targeted direct mail advertising to the communities you specifically desire.

Getting started

There are many different ways to utilize an effective direct mail marketing campaign. Direct mail can illustrate the simplicity of your landscaping services with the complete range of services and products that you provide. Your direct mail marketing campaign can share the benefits of how your small shop or large landscaping service is still a current and valuable option.

It's often best to hire a professional graphic designer or a marketing agency to design your direct mail campaigns. You've surely seen prospective clients attempt to do a landscape design themselves, hoping to save money; don't follow their lead with a do-it-yourself advertisement. Your business must look professional. Your direct mail device must convey the message that you want to get across.

Direct mail can be facilitated independently, with direct mail houses and through local printers as well as through nationally recognized direct mail resources that are available in most major communities

across America, such as Clipper Magazine, a premier-quality, full-color direct mail advertising magazine publication. Steve Zuckerman, president of the service, suggests the following guidelines and strategies to help your future direct mail marketing campaigns to be more successful:

— "FREE" always works great! Nothing beats 'FREE' and it can surely help to persuade current customers to try new services and products as well as to get new customers to try you for the first time. Consider offering an extra complimentary lawn service or upgrade with an annual agreement purchase of your services.

"...discover the wonderful financial and creative benefits of nationally respected direct mail resources like Clipper Magazine..."

— Use dollars off and not percentages. Your lawn care and landscaping customers will react much better to strong dollars off discounts and incentives. Percentage discounts really are not perceived to be as strong, especially if they are only 10% to 20% off. Unless you use 50% off or higher percentage types of discounts, they will be perceived as weak offers and ignored.

— Use care with disclaimers. Try to avoid excessive disclaimers and rules for what is not included in these varied offers. Try to keep your special offers simple with words like, "No Double Discounts. Expires 00/00/07." Use expiration dates of no more than 60 to 90 day to keep your offers timely.

Safety in numbers or the power of one?

If you're going to use the solo direct mail route, send over-sized, colorful direct mail postcards, fliers and personalized letters, whenever possible. The postage is less expensive than standard mail with postcards and unlike envelopes; they don't have to be opened for the potential client to immediately see your offer. Use a high quality paper stock for your postcards. They're more durable and they're more appealing to the recipient. For solo direct mail, you will need to write the copy, create the artwork, determine your targeted markets and hire a local direct mail house to facilitate the mailing. Make sure there are beautifully manicured lawns and gardens illustrated on your postcards, fliers and letters.

Regardless of your landscaping specialties, an on-going direct mail campaign is usually necessary to drive the point home.

If desired, aligning with a professional equipment manufacturer or product supplier vendor is a great way to increase your visibility and still stay true to your advertising budget. Manufacturers often offer quality advertising templates that you would merely need to insert your contact information in to. The work is practically done for you. In addition to providing boilerplate advertising templates, many product manufacturers will work with you to present their products in a pleasing manner in your establishment. Like many products on the market, manufacturers offer a unique point-of-purchase display that will not only accent your décor, but create client curiosity.

As you investigate the price of a solo direct mail campaign, you may discover the wonderful financial and creative benefits of nationally

respected direct mail resources like Clipper Magazine, Savvy Shopper, Mint Magazine, Val Pak, Money Mailer and others that are available in your local community.

For example, Clipper Magazine is respected as a unique premier-quality, full-color, glossy direct mail magazine. Most of the others are usually in an envelope format, with a myriad of advertisers who market themselves together. The cost of cooperative and magazine format direct mail is usually only three to four cents per home as opposed to solo direct mail campaigns, which will usually cost between fifty cents to one dollar per home. When you add up the costs of artwork, printing, mailing labels and postage, it is a greater advantage to use colorful and upscale direct mail magazines, cooperative direct mail or a combination of both. Some direct mail program will offer complimentary marketing consultations, artwork and the use of professional photographs, mailing lists, printing and postage all in one simple package. Plus, their marketing consultants can share examples of other successful landscaping advertisers from around the country. You will be able to review a small library of photographs, offers and special promotions that really work. If needed, they can supply testimonials and telephone numbers from others in similar businesses to yours, so you can also call them for advice.

Mike Carbillano of M. Carbillano Landscaping & Masonry, Westchester Market, NY, is a witness to the success that a service, such as Clipper Magazine can offer a landscaping business. "We have advertised in this magazine for over a year and have received five times the response from this magazine compared to other media. From each ad we place, we usually receive an average of 100 calls for estimates and get four jobs totaling \$30,000. Our best response to date was when we received over 100 calls and eight jobs totaling more than \$100,000—with two weeks left to go."

Marketing consultations

No matter what form of radio, TV,

newspaper, magazine or direct mail marketing you plan to use, ask your advertising sales representatives to share examples of what has worked well for other similar landscapers and lawn care business owners. Generally their sales representatives will help you plan the most effective annual direct mail marketing campaigns with customized advertising solutions for your business.

Realistic expectations

Direct mail advertising really works, especially with very strong offers and ongoing campaigns! Like any advertising, promotion and marketing, it takes a long-term investment to successfully market your landscaping business. Visit with your direct mail sales consultant to set realistic expectations, so you are not disappointed. Special offers, coupons and gift certificates are easy to track. It's not just about getting dozens of new first-time clients from each advertisement. A few new big clients will make it all pay off handsomely. Plus, most annual agreement clients will repeat year after year, once they are on board and happy you're your first year of landscaping services. Many people will be attracted to what you offer without the coupon or direct mail advertisement. One new lawn care client may result in several thousands of service sales dollars per year – so as few as five, 10 or 20 new clients from any one advertisement needs to be considered a big success

To determine the statistical effectiveness of your direct mail advertising campaigns, plan to ask every new client how they first heard about you. Many clients will call or bring in their coupons and gift certificates. Some will still ask their friends, neighbors and co-workers for a referral or recommendation after seeing your direct mail advertisement, so the combination will be a winner for you. You will also need to measure your total sales volume each month or season, especially on the annualized lawn care services that you are promoting with your direct mail efforts.

You worked hard on your vision. You offer the best of yourself, your

landscaping services and the best quality landscaping products around. As proud as you are of your business, why stop short of a perfect marketing plan to build it up? Like the purchase of an exotic flower or a beautiful new tree to accent a perfectly manicured lawn, every dollar counts and getting the most of your marketing dollars can begin with cooperative direct mail.

For a complimentary direct mail advertising consultation or more information about Clipper Magazine resources near you, call 888-569-5100 or visit their website at www.ClipperMagazine.com.

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