

Tough Times call for Tough Tactics Part 2
By Gale R. Brown, President, Lead Builder Seminars

What has been the bane of existence for most dealers today? – Cold calling. Or, to put it bluntly, the demise of telemarketing! What's happened! There are companies that now offer devices like the "Telemarketing Zapper" and phone companies that supply you with "Caller ID" so you never have to take a call from someone you don't know. Now you've got "Do Not Call" lists in 22 states! You can be fined \$11,000 if you telemarket someone by mistake whose name is on the list. The 2nd time you make that same mistake, it can cost you \$25,000! Do the math. How many mistakes can your company afford!

So, where is that magic bullet...that one idea that will take your company into the stratosphere? There is no single solution to being a successful contractor. It is a combination of all your efforts to promote yourself that makes you successful. It's the brand marketing you do on an everyday basis and all the effective ways you use to enhance your name, image and logo.

I'll give you some specific examples from just a handful of ideas that dealers with whom I've worked that have really helped to launch them. I worked with a large dealer in Boston who felt that he was "damned if he did and damned if he didn't" participate in a major home improvement show there. Most dealers don't want their customers going to the competition. We found a way to attract customers to his booth at the show.

We created a puzzle piece promotion that we did as a direct mail program. His past customers (who had partial jobs), rehash customers and referrals received a puzzle piece they had to fit into the puzzle at the show that was displayed on an easel at their booth. Out of the 2500 piece shrink-wrapped postcard mailing, only 10 of those mailings had the winning piece. When those people with the winning piece brought it to their booth, they got to select a prize from the "treasure chest" which contained baseball jackets, gift certificates for a dinner for two (donated by a restaurant that wanted to co-op the program), baseball tickets to Red Sox games and more. It was a successful promotion that generated a lot of interest. How many new leads do you think the dealer got out of that?

I worked with a dealer in the Midwest who went to every festival known to mankind -- the "Blueberry Festival", the "Great Pumpkin Festival", the "Popcorn Festival". A friend of mine was even "Queen of the Potato Festival" one year! Lots of locals attended the event and this dealer who did sunrooms had a trailer made up with the sunroom display completely furnished and decorated. At the end of the festival parade (every good festival has a parade!), people went to eat the great junk food you find at these events and walked through the trailer depositing a card to win a free sunroom for their home. Since he was the only dealer there, how many leads do you think he got from that event?

I worked with a great company in Rhode Island who did a hokey, homemade newsletter. It looked like something a local P.T.A. would send out. That's probably why everyone read it. It had lots of local news on easy ways to clean household products like polishing

silver with water softener and borax, photos of his latest “before” and “after” house and how much better it looked. It contained contests for his “valued past customers” on winning a bed and breakfast weekend trip for anyone sending along referrals and it generated interest and readership and LEADS. It kept his name in front of his customers for their own needs and to recommend to friends.

A big distributor I worked with in Richmond, Virginia, held a distributor education clinic. He served some great barbequed pulled pork sandwiches, chips and drinks and had a lively country music band. As part of the program, the dealers who came in got to work with the fabricator’s salesmen who were there to show them benefits of their windows and the best ways to do in-home demonstrations. I gave a mini-clinic on some sales promotion and lead generation ideas. These guys just swarmed in with their hook and ladder trucks and in luxury cars for the free meal, the music and the training. It was a total win-win program and generated lots of new sales for this distributor whose dealers really appreciated the program.

Then there was the phenomenal “Anniversary Celebration” one dealer held in St. Louis. We got all our prizes donated by local companies who wanted to “co-op” with us. Free hot dogs, buns and chips from the local grocer who wanted to give out their grocery coupons to our customers and let us put lead boxes in their stores to register for a “houseful of windows”. We had free pop from a local bottler who also wanted to give out coupons to drive business to buy more beverages.

We had road signs and flags every ten feet up and down the road leading to his store that brought in traffic from the street. We had balloons for the kids and a spinning wheel where you could win discounts on windows, coupons from a local miniature golf place, coupons for fast food meals and more – all donated by local merchants with whom the dealer did a co-op program. They even helped pay for his ad in the newspaper featuring the event! Since school was out and the kids were bored and looking for something to do, a mid-summer event like this one worked extremely well. And what did it cost him to generate goodwill and leads?

These are just a handful of great ideas we cover at a Lead Builders Seminar. Ideas that have worked for hundreds of customers just like yours. I’m looking forward to sharing more of these effective ideas with you and some of your dealers at NWDA’s January Educational Seminar. It’s just around the corner now and if you haven’t already registered, don’t miss out! Enrollment is limited. Contact Lori Nasatka at NWDA headquarters or a Board Member, or check out their web site at www.nwda.net for registration information. I look forward to visiting with you.