

The Power of Social Media

Helping contractors generate leads with Facebook could make you a valuable resource

When asked what they need to grow their business, contractors usually mention leads. There are free sources of leads that too few in the industry understand well enough to pursue, but this is where LBM sales professionals can help. One source is Facebook.

The raw power of social media blindsided my family and me last summer while on vacation in New York City. The story is too detailed to go into for this column, but go to Google Images and type “John Calipari Hates Puppies” in the search box. You’ll see a picture of my youngest son, Tanner, holding a sign at a filming of the Today Show, and University of Kentucky basketball coach John Calipari’s Facebook and Twitter responses that caused the picture to go viral. It demonstrates the momentum that social media can generate.

If you’d like to have a more value-based discussion with your customers about lead generation, but don’t feel comfortable with Facebook, ask your customers if they have a Facebook page. If they do, “Like” it and start observing what, if anything, they post. When you notice customers posting, pay attention to what they do. What do they focus on? Do you notice patterns in their posts? Ask your customers how their posts are working for them? How many leads are they getting? Are they looking to make any changes?

Seeking this information helps you understand their social media strategy and results, which you can share with other customers. I also recommend Bradley Hartmann’s book, *The Skeptical Lumberman Guide to Social Media*. It includes good advice for building material distribution companies to consider when exploring social media plat-

forms. Although I focus on LinkedIn and Facebook, Bradley discusses other platforms, as well, such as Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter. Reading his book would be a good start to your educational journey through social media.

It will take a few months of consistent effort before results will be noticed. I’ve been communicating with a few contractors across the country using Facebook to generate leads and a few best practices have emerged:

- 1. Post regularly.** Post at least four days per week, daily is preferable.
- 2. Respond quickly.** When somebody sends you a message or posts a comment to one of your posts, respond quickly.
- 3. Use hashtags (#).** A hashtag groups things together, makes posts easier to find, and builds organic growth in the network.
- 4. Be different.** Larry Lee, owner of Home Again Roofing & Construction in Tulsa, Okla., is also the Tulsa Roof Surfer. He posts selfies from customers’ roofs, in a surfing pose. He hashtags them as #RoofSurfer and it’s catching on. Eric Gibson, owner of Squirrelz Home Improvement in Dayton, Ohio, also posts from customers’ rooftops. He uses the hashtag #squirrelzeyview. These guys feature different ideas and pictures and share before and after shots of their work. They use humor and don’t take themselves too seriously. As a result, they are generating dozens of free leads each month.

Salespeople should help customers grow their business. Helping contractors generate leads with Facebook could make you a valuable resource to their business, which is not a bad thing to be, huh? Feel free to contact me with any social media marketing success stories you come across. **PS**



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