

This editorial appeared in the January/February 2005 issue of Building Systems Magazine

How To Target Market

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Tactics for finding your buyer's sweet spot

In this first Power Marketing article we will attempt to address target marketing. I look forward to hearing from you each month concerning these marketing articles. I can be reached at bflook@power-marketing.com.

Target marketing is the process of knowing to whom you are selling and what they want to buy. You may have the greatest product in the world, but if you attempt to sell it to the wrong audience with the wrong message you have no strength. Target marketing means you are hitting your target audience with the correct marketing message. Let's address all three aspects: knowing your audience, creating the correct compelling, benefit-driven message, and then communicating that message to the audience.

Since most systems builders and manufacturers' primary audience is small builders, I will endeavor to help you target those builders with compelling selling messages that count. What we are talking about here is business-to-business marketing, not retail marketing. The key is a willingness to target with rifle-like accuracy, not shotgun spread; one takes guts, the other takes luck.

First, let's talk about builders and what they are looking for in a manufactured home product. Do they want service, quality, and speed of delivery, cost control, a broad product line or a comprehensive purchasing system? You might be tempted to say, "they want all that," and you may be correct. But, there is within that list of possible benefits, one that best serves your builder's needs.

Remember, you need to sell benefits, not features. A feature is one of many marketing points you promote to builders; a benefit is the actual value your potential builder can derive from a feature. For instance, in your sales region, you may know that your potential builder clients value speed. The weather plays a huge factor and they want their home onsite, in place, and under roof as fast as possible. Speed is the feature. The benefit is that your builder can get on with his trades quicker and settle his house faster. That means you market the benefit, not speed. Another example might be that your builders are building so many homes with a very small staff that they're being strangled with invoices, trade contractor messages, and non construction related business issues. The feature is a comprehensive business management system; the benefit is a structure that removes the burden of details off the builders' back and provides a simple way to track and monitor all the aspects of his busy construction business.

I often hear, "if I only focus on one aspect of what we offer, the builders will think we don't offer anything else, then we lose them." That logic leaves most manufacturers doing the same thing, marketing the same thing, and looking the same... exactly the same. That's called shotgun marketing; you may hit your audience with a message, but you will only wound them. The manufacturer with an ad two pages back will then get the kill on your wounded builder. You understand the metaphor.

Remember, target marketing means you are hitting your target audience with the correct marketing message. We will establish that your primary audience is small builders. We will then conclude that your company's compelling selling message is a very affordable line of entry-level homes from 1600-2000 square foot. How do you communicate that message to your builder market?

First determine the search corridor (we will discuss the search corridor in great detail another month). The search corridor is the total package of media (newspaper, magazines, radio, etc.) that your builder prospects naturally gravitate to in order to learn about or purchase new homes. Where will they look? That is where you need to target your message. I suggest that they will

look at magazines such as this one or Builder Magazine. They will go online to a search engine like Google and type in “modular houses” or “manufactured housing.” They will go to the websites of associations such as the Building Systems Council or the Modular Building System’s Association. They will also talk to other builders at association meetings or over lunch. In order to target that audience with your compelling selling message you must know where they go and get there first.

The temptation is to become everything for everyone and never risk truly targeting a market and consequently not hitting others. There are builders you now have that you neither need nor want. They are nonproductive and cost you money and time.

By understanding your product and matching it with a target builder’s abilities and needs and then focusing your compelling selling message to only builders who fit that description your results will produce better builder clients, not necessarily more.

Prospecting is like fishing

Prospecting is a bit like target marketing, but here we’ll address the retail side of new home sales. So how is prospecting like fishing? Every good fisherman knows that the fish determines the bait. If you are looking to land some “smallies” in the Susquehanna River, you never leave your tube baits or your spinners at home. But, if you are trout fishing in a small Maryland stream you pack cheese and Power Bait. Everyone knows that, right, wrong!

First point again is that you must know your audience (your fish) and then you will more clearly understand the message (the bait). If your buyers are first-time entry-level singles or young couples, you can easily determine that they are coming from a rental situation. That means that they do not understand the ramifications of a \$175,000 home in financial terms. It may even be the best deal in town. But, they do understand \$750 a month. An attempt to sell that buyer with a great price ad may work, but my experience is that an ad that clearly spells out the monthly price

communicates better. They have been paying \$675 a month for rent for two years, “we can do \$750” is the thought process.

Use your headline to powerfully denominate your unique selling proposition in terms best suited for your target market. Know your fish and target them with a compelling selling message. That’s why fishing and prospecting are alike.