

GUERRILLA MARKETING

Most home inspection companies don't have a visible office location or walk-in customers and don't have the resources to market to the general public, so frequently home inspectors target industries that are working with individuals who are buying or selling a home. To spread the word about their services they usually rely on personal, face to face networking and presentations to real estate offices, sometimes overlooking other methods of effective marketing. One such marketing technique is Guerilla Marketing

Guerilla Marketing (Guerilla Marketing) takes consumers by surprise; makes an indelible impression, and pops up where and when people least expect it. This form of marketing is desired because it often has a high return on investment. Guerrilla marketers are able to make a lasting impression without spending a lot of their marketing budget. By being a little cleverer and more unpredictable, you challenge consumers who desire some fun in their products or services.



Many of these tactics includes ambushes, sabotage, raids and elements of surprise. Much like guerrilla warfare, guerrilla marketing uses the same sort of tactics in the marketing industry.

This alternative advertising style relies heavily on unconventional marketing strategy, high energy and imagination. Guerrilla Marketing is about taking the consumer by surprise, make an indelible impression and creates a buzz. Guerrilla marketing is said to make a far more valuable impression with consumers in comparison to more traditional forms of advertising and marketing. This is due to the fact that most guerrilla marketing campaigns aim to strike the consumer at a more personal and memorable level.

While the home inspection industry tends to be more conservative and filled with lineal thinkers, Guerrilla marketing techniques are still well suited for the profession and have been employed successfully by a number of home inspectors. When executed well, Guerrilla Marketing can be low cost yet reach a highly targeted audience. It can also be a great way to get noticed, distinguish from the competition and earn a reputation for being fun and different.

We've put together several examples of more tried and true marketing techniques used by home inspectors in and around Charlotte and across the country. While the purist may not classify some of these as true Guerrilla Marketing for our industry we feel they fit the bill and hopefully one or more can make a difference in your business.

Office Visits

One of the most successful home inspectors in the Charlotte area is Preston Sandlin at Home Inspection Carolinas. Preston has taken advantage of the Guerrilla Marketing philosophy to

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heart and applied it to the standard office presentation. He has branded himself as the Rodney Dangerfield of office presentations by wearing loud and obnoxious golf pants to every single office presentation and visit he makes. Sure he brings food, gifts and talks about home inspection but what everyone remembers how fun it was and his loud pants!



Now we're not saying everyone should run out and buy some crazy golf pants but you should put on your thinking cap and come up with some innovative ways to make your office presentation stand out from the rest.

Men are from Mars Women are from Venus

The truth is that men and women see things differently and have different priorities and interests. Most home inspectors are men and most real estate agents are women. So it's sometimes difficult for the analytical home inspector to view or understand marketing to a female-dominated profession. Things that a lady may like and remember are different than what a man thinks would be of interest. So consulting with your wife or other females for suggestions and ideas is well worth the effort. Here is one such item that has had great success for some home inspectors.



Put together seasonal "goodie" jars. This takes very little time and money. Just search the internet for ideas. These colorful mason jars filled with seasonal treats and topped with a colorful piece of cloth and ribbon are always accepted at a real estate office and stand a very good chance of being placed where they can be seen and taken.

Element of Surprise

General McArthur has a saying during his campaign to regain the Philippine Islands. "Hit them where they are not". This same ideal can apply to home inspector marketing. How many times have you visited an office and not got past the receptionist "Gate Keeper" without an appointment, invitation or you have been asked to join their preferred vendor program for a fee. Frustrating to say the least but understandable as I'm sure most real estate offices are visited by a large number of service providers each and every day.

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So what's a home inspector to do? Hit them where they are not, that is to say visit open houses. Use the Guerrilla Marketing tactic of surprise. Take some time and identify open houses in your area and map them out then drop by for a short visit and introduction. Usually the agents are pretty bored so bring a "survival kit" filled with treats, magazines and other items. Don't over stay your visit and be respectful if potential buyers are present.

Try reaching out to agents that you know and have an ongoing relationship with and offer to help sponsor their next open house. This is a great way to meet perspective clients who are actively looking to buy a home.

Other options include community or school festivals and sporting events. Tom Evans with Legacy Home Inspection and NCLHIA member sponsored his local area high school with an advertisement in their football program and a banner on the baseball field fence. What a great place to meet you people with families that will be soon needed a new home or looking to trade up.

High Speed

Race cars have been called 200 mile an hour bill boards. So take a cue from racing and use vehicle decals to constantly market your business. Most inspectors cover the Charlotte metro area which means a lot of driving and sitting in traffic. While most inspectors can't afford advertising on stationary bill board they can afford a few hundred dollars for some professional vehicle decals. Some inspectors have purchased a "company" truck and don't want to plaster decals on it as it is really a personal vehicle. That's great but this should be a business first and a hobby second.

Howdy Home Inspections is a great example of branding using vehicle graphics and decals so when they show up at the clients home, it projects a level of professionalism and everyone know who is there and why.

Reset and Refresh

To be treated as a professional you need to look and act the part. Too many home inspectors cling to an old outdated logo that was not professionally designed and it may be time to get that logo updated and refreshed. There are a number of cost effective options available to get a great looking logo. Try one of the on-line services like Logo Design Guru where they set up a competition and you get multiple designs and options to choose from.



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Brand your image by investing in some logo apparel. Queensboro is a North Carolina company that specializes in logo apparel at an affordable price. You can upload your logo to their site, adjust the colors and see it on different shirts and other items before you buy. Remember to wear your shirts when you out in public you'd be surprised at people will pay attention to what's on your shirt and may even ask you a question related to home inspection.

Recycle

While the internet and social media is all the rage now the truth is that it's very crowded and everyone is vying for the top spot and the most attention. In fact it's gotten to the point where a lot of social media has become just digital noise and is overlooked or ignored.



Try direct mailing using a plain number 10 business envelope. It's easy and inexpensive and delivered directly to the individual you're trying to reach. In fact it's so old fashioned that I bet most home inspectors have abandoned it for the digital world of emails and face-book posts because it's perceived to be cheaper and more effective.

Think how many emails you delete without being opened, a plain envelope addressed to an individual will get opened, even if they toss what's inside they had to look at it and make a decision to toss or keep it. The simple fact that they saw your logo has left an impression now follow up with a second or third mailing at strategic intervals and you'll reinforce your brand and drive referrals to your business. Here's the best thing is you'll be about the only one doing it as everyone else has branded it as old and not effective. Used correctly this is a very effective method to market.

Inspector Gadget

Again nothing new here but it's a very effective way to market all the time for a very low price. Typical handouts are coffee mugs, pens, pads and calendars. Try adding something in that coffee mug. A packet of coffee or tea along with some other treats and a nice ribbon or bow will be appreciated and remembered more. Spend a few extra dollars and get a nicer and different style mug.

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Pens are great but everyone has them, again it all in how you use them. Buy a bunch of inexpensive pens with you company name and contact info use these as “Drop” pens. Leave them wherever you go, the bank, post office or with your tip when you go out to eat. Make sure to target areas where agents might be such as a convention or training class. Purchase some nicer pens and make sure to give some to your client, the agents and leave one for the homeowner after all they have to move somewhere and may need an inspector.



Two inspectors were sitting at a restaurant waiting to be seated. A nice young lady notices they were dressed similar and asked if they worked for the same company. One of them replied “no but they were both home inspectors.” The young lady responded “Oh great I’m an agent and was looking for a home inspector, do you have a card?” One home inspector said yes and jumped up and went to his car to get a card. The other home inspector reached in his pocket and said “I don’t have a card but I have a business pen” and handed her a company pen. She responded “Oh good something I can use” about this time the other inspector returned with his card. Guess who got the follow on referrals?

One of the most successful items is a tape measure. It seems that everyone needs and appreciates a tape measure. These can be had for very little money. Some home inspectors buy them from the dollar store then add a label with their logo on it.

The Library

Say what? Okay books are a great marketing tool. Home maintenance books can be had for under \$3. Most of us have been trained from a young age to respect and take care of books. So when you give someone a book it’s likely they will keep it and not throw it away. InterNACHI has maintenance books and can customize the cover to accent and highlight your company and logo. Books are great to hand out at home shows or other community events. Always put your business card inside and if you don’t get the customized books have some business card stickers printed and put one on the front and back covers.



Summary

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Really nothing ground breaking and many of these ideas may not be considered Guerrilla Marketing but for the conservative and somewhat niche home inspector profession these are all proven but sometimes overlooked low cost and effective marketing tools. With a little though and effort you can implement any of these ideas or some of you own original ideas. The key is to not be afraid to try out an idea, give it a chance and measure your results adjusting as needed to achieve the desired results.