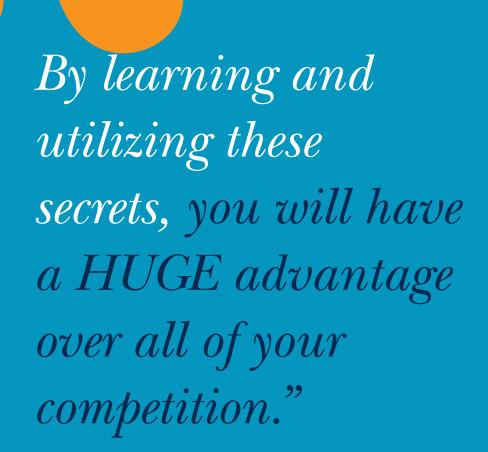
CRUCIAL MARKETING SECRETS Every Pool Builder Should Know



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Brett Lloyd Abbott

Introduction

BRETT LLOYD ABBOTT, MYM AUSTIN INC.

love pool builders. They are blessed with the amazing opportunity to create beautiful "memory makers" for homeowners all over the world. I'm talking about "memory makers" that will make people happier and healthier, and bring families and friends closer together. Yes, pool builders have an enviable job.

I too have a wonderful job. My company works exclusively with swimming pool builders all over the world. As a result, I have the amazing opportunity to help pool builders do what they do, without wasting their time or money on marketing and advertising schemes that aren't going to pay for themselves. And by the way—that is EXACTLY the standard by which you should measure ALL of your marketing efforts. If it doesn't pay for itself in NEW PROFITS, then you probably shouldn't be doing it.

That's why I created this collection of "7 Crucial Marketing Secrets"—so that you will understand clearly and plainly what you SHOULD be doing and WHY, rather than haphazardly GUESS as to which marketing strategies and tactics might make sense for you.

These top seven secrets are not only the most important for any pool builder, but they are also the most often overlooked, misapplied and misunderstood strategies of all. So by learning and utilizing these secrets, you will have a HUGE advantage over all of your competition.

So read on, and stop worrying so much about marketing, and get back to the work you REALLY want to do: Building "memory makers" for homeowners all over the world.

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CRUCIAL MARKETING SECRET #1 "Buying a Pool Is a Big Deal."

don't want to insult your intelligence here, because everyone knows that buying a pool is "a big deal." **But I doubt you realize—especially from a marketing perspective—how incredibly rare and unique this marketing challenge is.** Just stop for a moment, and imagine that YOU are a homeowner who is thinking about buying a pool. Of the ten million or so different things you could potentially purchase today, can you think of ANY purchase that fits ALL of the criteria below? For instance:

That immediately narrows it down to just a handful of similar high-dollar items, such as homes, boats, automobiles, recreational vehicles, and maybe a super high-end home A/V system. Which means everything you know about buying the other nine+ million items doesn't apply here.



(it's a <u>RARE</u> PURCHASE.

Think "piano" here. It's not like purchasing a car or home, which most people will experience maybe five to ten times in their lifetime. It's more like buying a really nice piano. **You only do it once or twice in your lifetime. So you have little or no experience at it.**



→ IT'S TOTALLY <u>UNIQUE</u> AND <u>CUSTOM</u>.

I love the description of a gunite swimming pool as offered by the National Plasterers Council: "A handcrafted product installed in an uncontrolled environment." YOU may know what you're talking about, but imagine what it's like for the typical homeowner who doesn't have a freaking clue regarding the latest methods, features, options, and technology on a modern pool? (And knows even less about "tensile strength" versus "compressive strength", and any number of other things related to the pool construction process.) It's like finding and hiring an unknown artist to custom-build for you a unique and very expensive work of art.



(A) IT'S PRETTY MUCH A PERMANENT DECISION.

If you buy a car, boat, or RV that you hate, it's not a disaster because you can fairly easily sell it or trade it in for another. In fact, even if you purchase a house that you hate, it's not terribly difficult to get rid of it. **Not so with an inground swimming pool.** If you love your house but hate your pool, you pretty much have to sell BOTH. (Or "remove and replace" the pool, which of course is even MORE expensive.)



SO LET'S RECAP HERE, FROM THE HOMEOWNER'S PERSPECTIVE:

"I'm buying something that's very expensive,

I don't know much about it,

I've never done it before,

and if I make a mistake,

I'm going to have to sell my home."



NOT EXACTLY AN IDEAL SELLING ENVIRONMENT, IS IT?

Of course, let's be realistic. We know it's not an IMPOSSIBLE sale, because you and thousands of other pool builders have been selling swimming pools for more than 100 years. **But at the same time, we've got to recognize that even though Mr. and Mrs. Homeowner are excited about getting a swimming pool, they are ALSO most likely filled with some level of ANXIETY, FEAR, RELUCTANCE, and DISTRUST.**

Yes, showing them "pretty swimming pools" is important. But if we can ALSO address their anxieties, fears, and trust issues, then we will have a much better chance of getting them to choose YOU over your competitors.

That's why we must remind ourselves that—from the homeowner's perspective—buying a swimming pool is a very big deal.

CRUCIAL MARKETING SECRET #2

"You Look Like Everybody Else." s we said, "Buying a pool is a very big deal." While most homeowners are happy and excited about getting a pool, they're ALSO a little nervous. So if we can address their fears, anxieties, and trust issues, then we'll have a significantly better chance of getting them to choose YOU over of your competitors.

With that in mind, let's move on to the NEXT crucial marketing secret for pool builders:

"To the Average Homeowner, You Look Just like Everybody Else."

This is the quintessential challenge for EVERY business owner, AND every marketing consultant who ever tried to help a business owner. How do we make the buying public recognize and appreciate the fact that you are somehow different and better than all the other pool builders out there? To put this in marketing terms:

How do we change your "Outside Perception" to match your "Inside Reality"?

I think the best visual example I've ever found to explain "inside reality" versus "outside perception" is the much maligned "UGLI® fruit" from Jamaica. Take a look at this photograph. **What's your immediate perception when you see this nasty-looking fruit?**



No doubt, the UGLI® fruit (which happens to be a natural hybrid cross between a grapefruit, a tangerine, and an orange) has an undeniably unappealing skin. The ugly brown spots create an "outside perception" that would instantly make you think that "the inside must be rotten." But that's only because you don't know anything about the "inside reality" of this unique fruit.

If you have the courage to cut it open and take a bite, you'll discover **it's actually quite sweet and delicious**. Definitely no hint of "rottenness" whatsoever. As an added bonus, **it's very easy to peel**. And **also very healthy for you**. So we're talking about a fruit with an outstanding "inside reality", but an undeniably challenging "outside perception" to overcome.

(As a tragic side note, I once asked a room full of 100 pool builders if they'd ever heard of this amazing fruit, and NO ONE had ever heard of it. I first learned of the UGLI® fruit way back in the 1970s. So that tells me the marketing agency who's in charge of promoting UGLI® fruit is obviously failing miserably.)

So how do we fix this "Inside Reality/Outside Perception" issue, and avoid the tragic fate of the UGLI® fruit?



STEP 1: "KILL THE PLATITUDES."

Most marketing and advertising is filled with "empty promises" and "hollow platitudes" that are spoken as if they are significant, but really mean nothing when you stop and think about it. Here are some classic (and very real) examples of platitudes:

- "Driven to satisfy our customers"
- "Fulfilling your family's dreams"
- "Built with integrity and experience"
- "We are <your city's> premier builder!"
- "Experienced. Skilled. Innovative. Since 19 ."
- "We'll make your backyard dreams come true."

Are these platitudes as obvious to you as they are to me? If not, then use any of these three super-easy "tests" to determine whether or not you've got platitudes:

1. TEST 1: "WHO ELSE CAN SAY THAT?" After reading the statement, ask yourself, "Who else can say that?" In the examples given above, the answer to this question would

be ANYONE and EVERYONE. (Yes, even a no-good schlock pool builder can and will say, "Built with integrity and experience.")

- 2. TEST 2: "WELL, I WOULD HOPE SO!" After hearing or reading your statement, would the homeowner be inclined to think, "Well, I would hope so!"? For example, if someone told me he was "driven to satisfy his customers", I would think, "Well I would hope so! That's what I'm paying you for!"
- 3. TEST 3: THE "SCRATCH-OUT / WRITE-IN" TEST. If you can scratch out your company name, and write in the name of your most-hated competitor, and it still sounds believable, then you've got platitudes.

So if you've got platitudes, what SHOULD you say INSTEAD?

→ STEP 2: "BRING IN THE FACTS."

The opposite of "platitudes" is "FACTS." Cold, hard, specific facts. Not "fluff." Not "feel good/ sound good" statements. *What can you say about your company that no one else can say?* Until you start uncovering and exposing some of your undeniable "inside reality" advantages to the public, you will forever be stuck with the same "outside perception" as every other pool builder in town.

Here are some examples of "inside reality" facts that would be a LOT more compelling and believable than meaningless platitudes:

- A+ Rating with the BBB
- Certified Building Professional® / CBP® on staff
- Certified Pool Operator® on staff
- Certified Service Professional® (CSP®) on staff
- Exclusive Dealer for
- Exclusively Recommended by
- Lifetime Warranty / Guarantee
- Member of (Aquatech, APSP, FSPA, BBB, SWD, Genesis3 Platinum, etc.)
- More than % of our business comes from referrals
- Winner of ____ International Design Awards

This is just a "starter" list; obviously you'll need to use or create whatever list is appropriate for you and your company. Just make sure you are SPECIFIC, and identifying things that not all of your competition can say.



























"Why should I choose YOU?"

Once you've found and eradicated all of your platitudes, and replaced them with interesting, compelling and believable facts, you should update all of your marketing materials, your advertising materials, your sales tools and your website to reflect these BELIEVABLE FACTS instead of the empty hollow platitudes. THEN you will begin to sound different from and better than your competition.

Otherwise, to the average homeowner, you will continue to look just like everybody else.



o far, we've recognized that "Buying a pool is a big deal" and "Until you demonstrate otherwise, you look like everyone else." Now let's talk about the one and only marketing secret that can help you MAKE MORE MONEY, WORK LESS HOURS, and HAVE MORE FUN, all at the same time. I'm speaking, of course, of referrals.

Referrals are the best leads of all. But you don't have to BRIBE or BEG to get them.

Here's the challenge with writing a chapter on "getting more referrals." It's kind of like me suggesting that we should all "have more world peace." Everyone's in support of it. But it takes more than just "wanting it" to make it happen.

In fact, I'll be so bold as to say that—much like social media—when it comes to referrals, you're probably doing it WRONG.

That's because most training and education on "getting more referrals" is based on one or both of the following "world-famous, tried-and-true, yet highly annoying and only occasionally successful" referral strategies:

- 1. BEGGING: "Please, please, PLEASE, would you give me the names of five of your friends, so I can try to sell to them? Who do YOU know who might be interested in MY services?"
- 2. BRIBING: "Hey, buddy—I'll give you \$200 if you'll give me the name of somebody, and they buy a pool from me."

Yes, these strategies can work. But you and I both know they only work a small percentage of the time. And here's why:

- First of all, they make you look and sound like an annoying and desperate insurance salesman who's trying to USE ME for his own personal gain.
- Second, it instantly demonstrates that you are first and foremost interested in YOUR OWN SUCCESS, rather than MY SATISFACTION.
- And third, you're asking a HAPPY, WEALTHY POOL OWNER to stop enjoying THAT for a while, and start being your personal sales assistant instead.

So if you thought you were "building a positive relationship" with this homeowner, you can kiss that idea goodbye. And even more importantly—these approaches ignore the most fundamental of all rules when it comes to getting more referrals:

If they knew someone, and they thought YOU were the best fit, THEY WOULD TELL YOU. Even MORE likely—THEY WOULD TELL THEIR FRIENDS!

You wouldn't have to beg them. And you certainly wouldn't have to bribe them. And if you don't believe me, then answer this question: **Have you EVER had an opportunity to refer a friend to someone who could help them, but DECLINED because that salesperson failed to first ASK you for referrals, or offer to BRIBE you with a little "kickback"?**

Nah, me neither.

You and I don't give referrals because we were begged or bribed by a salesperson. We give referrals because WE WANT TO HELP OUR FRIENDS.

So the strategy you SHOULD be using, rather than "bribe and beg", is to focus on creating a spectacular experience for your client, so that if and when they ever run into someone who might benefit from your services, THEY WON'T HESITATE to recommend you with glowing enthusiasm. If they genuinely believe you'll do a great job, they'll be DELIGHTED to refer you, because now they're doing a favor for their friend.

Oh, did I forget to tell you? It's not about you.

So let's get to what I REALLY wanted to share with you in this section. Not "Hey, you should get more referrals", but "Here are some BETTER, MORE CLEVER WAYS for you to get more referrals."

Let me start by telling you about one of the most successful pool sales people I ever met. Down in Miami, for seven years straight, she consistently sold TWICE as much as every other salesperson in the office. Everyone mistakenly assumed she was getting the best leads because she was sleeping with the sales manager. (Which in fact, she was. But that's okay, because they were married.) So while the other sales reps all presumed "he's giving her all the best leads", the fact is she was NURTURING the best leads HERSELF, by delighting all of her existing clients.

In fact, by the time she retired from that job, she was working EXCLUSIVELY off of referrals.

I had the good fortune to meet some of her clients in their homes, and I could instantly tell that they absolutely adored her. In fact, one homeowner had just come back from a trip to Columbia, and handed us a big bag of fresh roasted gourmet coffee beans, asking us to please give it to her, with his thanks.

It's almost like the homeowner was trying to bribe the sales rep!

Naturally, I met with this salesperson to discuss her success, and uncover her secret. And truth be told, she wasn't "twice as good" or "twice as smart" as the other salespeople. She was just "a little bit smarter" when it came to managing her clients. It was just "a few little things" that she did here and there that set her apart from everyone else. Things such as:

- She would always send a personal handwritten thank-you note to every homeowner, regardless of whether they purchased from her or not.
- She would send ANOTHER personal note whenever someone signed the contract.
- Then 30 days after signing the contract, she would drop by with a little "swimming-pool-chip-and-dip" set, with another handwritten note that said "Here's a little pool for you to use while you're waiting for your big pool to be finished." (She admitted it was getting harder and harder to find that little chip and dip set. So whenever she found them, she would buy up all the inventory she could find.)



• Then after the pool was completed, there was a lovely gift basket that the company prepared for ALL of the salespeople to give to their clients. (Can you believe that some of the sales reps wouldn't even bother delivering the basket to the homeowner? They would have the service team do it.) Our "heroine salesperson", of course, would ALWAYS hand-deliver the gift herself, because she knew this was yet one more opportunity for her to further cement her positive relationship with the homeowner.

How many times do you suppose she "begged" or "bribed" a homeowner for a referral? **"Never"** would be the correct answer. (*This salesperson knew better. She wouldn't dream of insulting her clients like that.*)

And what amazes me most about this story is NOT how successful she was, but how reluctant the other 99% of all salespeople are in adopting her strategy. **What's so terrible about making a few small extra efforts here and there, to make sure that the homeowner loves you?** Like I said—she didn't work twice as hard. She just did "a few extra things" that set her apart from any other salesperson they'd ever met.

<u>So now let's talk about YOU.</u> How can we help YOU get more referrals? Well, handwritten notes are certainly nice. But if you're looking for a "silver bullet" to really crank up your referrals, here's what I would suggest

First, set up a policy that says, "The salesperson must perform a final walkthrough with the homeowner when the job is complete." (Sounds simple, right? I can tell you with a high degree of certainty that if YOUR sales people are doing this, they are in the small minority.)

Next, let's script EXACTLY what the sales rep is supposed to do in this meeting:

- 1. Tour the finished pool with the homeowner. You know the homeowner is bursting at the seams with pride. So ask them how they feel, now that the project is done. (After all, YOU'RE the person that helped make this happen. Enjoy the moment together.)
- 2. If they're disappointed with anything, you need to talk about it NOW. (That doesn't mean you have to "fix" it. It just means you have to LISTEN to them and ACKNOWLEDGE their concerns. Let them know you care. And if possible, look for a way to make them happier with the final results.)
- **3. Hand them a short and simple three-question survey and say,** "We're always trying to get better. Could you take just a minute to let us know how you felt about this project?" The survey could really be this simple:
 - Did anyone or anything impress you?
 - Were you disappointed in any way?
 - Any other comments you would like to share with us? (Leave plenty of blank space for this.
 You might wind up with a great testimonial to put on your website.)
- 4. Then while they're filling out the survey, excuse yourself for a moment, go out to your vehicle and bring in "the thoughtful gift" that you picked out just for them. (Now at this point, you might be inclined to accuse me of being "in cahoots" with Cliff Prescott of "Fat Towels." But I

assure you, I'm not associated with FatTowels in any way. I just think that the amazing and remarkable FatTowels are EXACTLY what you need to make a long-lasting impression on your homeowner, and ultimately to get you more referrals.) FatTowels ALWAYS impress, and they last forever, unlike a beach ball, or a pool float, or a bottle of champagne. I believe you should ALWAYS have several cases of these on hand, so that your sales reps will never have an excuse for failing to conduct these "Thank You" meetings. You can find them at www.FatTowels.com.



5. And finally, if you really want to "put the icing on the cake", I suggest you say something along the lines of this: "Hey, I'm sure you'd like to start enjoying your pool, so I'll get out of your hair. But before I go, could I get a photograph of all of you, out by your new pool?" This is just one more way to subliminally reinforce the closeness of your relationship with this homeowner. And don't forget, having 100 or so photographs of happy smiling homeowners standing next to 100 pools you built is not a bad thing either...

In wrapping up this discussion of referrals, I'd like to share with you one final thought. **Remember** that every new client is like a branch on a growing tree. Whether they love you or hate you, they're going to reach out and tell lots of other people all about you, for many years to come. So in this age of social media and online reviews, it only makes sense to try to ensure that what they say is "glowing with praise" rather than "blistering with condemnation."

So please follow the suggestions above. Because referrals really are the best leads of all.

CRUCIAL MARKETING SECRET #4 "Your Online Image Is More Important Than You Think."

o fully appreciate the significance of this secret, let me restate the key points of Secret #1 and Secret #2:

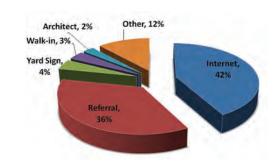
- TO THE AVERAGE HOMEOWNER, BUYING A POOL IS A VERY BIG DEAL. It's large, it's rare, it's unique, and it's very hard to undo if you get it wrong.
- And it's very difficult for the average homeowner to recognize and appreciate the differences between one pool builder and the next. TO THE AVERAGE HOMEOWNER, "YOU ALL LOOK THE SAME."

THEREFORE, it should be easy to recognize and appreciate the fact that:

- People will spend a LONG time thinking about this decision. Homeowners don't typically wake up one morning and say, "Hey, I've got an idea—let's get an in-ground swimming pool!" and then fork over a sizable down payment to a pool builder that same day. Most homeowners will spend MONTHS, if not YEARS, mulling over this decision before even making the decision to pick up the phone and call a builder for an interview.
- And they're going to do a fair amount of "research" before they call you, so that they don't feel like a helpless and vulnerable idiot in front of an expert pool builder/salesperson.

And WHERE do you suppose this typical homeowner is going to go to conduct their research? Consistently more than 80% of all pool-shopping homeowners will do some combination of the following:

- Talk to their friends. (Particularly those who recently purchased a swimming pool.)
- Go to the Internet. (Particularly Google and Yelp.)



So let's recap what we know about your typical prospective pool buyer. They are most likely:

- Nervous.
- Distrustful.
- Somewhat clueless.
- Hungry for information.
- Visiting the websites of you AND your competitors.
- Looking to see what OTHER people say about you—online and off.
- Committed to spending MONTHS, if not YEARS, searching for the answers they need.

So yes, I think it's safe for me to confidently and emphatically state...

"Your online image is more important than you think."

(There's a more blunt way to state the above, but I'm going to restrain myself for a moment, and first share with you a few more basic facts and insights that I think you really need on this subject.)

First of all, let me ask you this: What's the epitome of your "online image"? That would be YOUR WEBSITE, of course. (There are other places where your online image will come into play, including YELP, the BBB, online directories, and of course any number of social media sites. And they can ALL have SOME impact on your image, so I'll get to those in a minute. But first, let's focus on your ONE online entity that's more important than all of these others put together.)

Let's talk about what should be happening on your website.

To explain some key website fundamentals as clearly and succinctly as possible, I'm going to use a simple little "question-and-answer" approach, rather than a bunch of paragraphs of prose.



What's the PRIMARY PURPOSE of the HOME page?

To QUICKLY get people to the RIGHT page that contains the answers they're actually looking for.



How much time should people spend on the HOME page?

As little as possible.



How much time should people spend on THE REST of your website?

As MUCH as possible.



After the homepage, what's the MOST POPULAR page on any pool builder's website?

The photographs page. ALWAYS the photographs page.



How many photographs should I put on my website?

How many GOOD photographs do you have? THAT's how many photographs you should have on your website.



How big should the photographs be?

HUGE. As big as humanly possible. More accurately, your photos should be as big as the screen or monitor of the website visitor will allow. (This is actually easily handled with what is known as "Responsive Image" technology. It's similar to the mobile-friendly "responsive website design", but designed specifically for maximizing the size of photographs.)



What's the most powerful thing you can put on your 'ABOUT US' page?

A photograph of YOU, the owner.



What ELSE that should be on the 'ABOUT US' page?

Lots of interesting and compelling facts and information about you, your company, your history, your talents and specialties, your accreditations, etc. And NO PLATITUDES.



How important are things like font choices, colors, and the overall layout and design?

How important is it that your website visitors are attracted to YOU instead of your competition? (Pretty important, I would say!)



Is it important that my website be 'mobile-ready'?

Do you want people with mobile phones to buy your swimming pools?



Should I have an outbound link to my YouTube channel on my website?

If you honestly think it's a GOOD idea to ENCOURAGE people to LEAVE your website, then you are in SERIOUS trouble. You should stop reading this e-book immediately and seek professional help by calling MYM Austin at 877-634-8787.



But someone said I should encourage people to go see my YouTube videos...

If your videos are so great, then why aren't they also on your website? (Seriously, it's a GREAT idea to have a YouTube channel. But you should be using that to drive people TO your website, not AWAY from it.)



All of our business comes from referrals. Our website has never been a big source of leads for us. So this really doesn't apply to me, right?

Did you ever consider that maybe the reason your business is "all referrals" is because the "non-referrals" who discover you through your website are NOT IMPRESSED, and thus decide not to call you at all?

Did you ever consider the possibility that many of your potential referrals will ALSO go to your website, looking for some confirmation that you are indeed everything the referrer said you were? And if they're NOT impressed with what they see on your site, SOME of them may decide NOT to call you after all.

And if you really want to only focus on referrals—which is perfectly fine, by the way—then have you considered using your website as a "sales tool", to help explain to your referrals exactly what you do, and why you get so many referrals? (A lot of "high-end, low volume, under-the-radar" pool builders do this all the time. It saves them time, and also helps to weed out the tire-kickers and price-shoppers who really can't afford them any way.)



I have a nephew/daughter/friend who's a whiz at all this computer stuff. Should I have him/her build my website?

I have a nephew / daughter / friend who knows a lot about water. Should I have them build my swimming pool?



Why, Brett, are you making such a big deal about websites?

Because the structure and professionalism of your website is going to have a direct and significant impact on your ability to sell more swimming pools.

Okay, now as promised earlier in this article, here's the "more blunt" way for me to explain why the quality and presentation of your website is so darn important:

"Bluntly speaking—If your WEBSITE sucks, then most homeowners are going to presume that YOU suck."

Sorry, I know it's not fair, and I know that your website visitors are doing themselves a horrible disservice when they try to judge a pool builder simply by the beauty and content of their websites. But that, my friend, is the reality of the situation. (Don't believe me? Ask any homeowner who hasn't yet bought a pool. Show them the website of a lousy pool builder and a high-quality pool builder, and they will invariably choose whichever builder has the best-looking photos and the best-looking website.)

REMEMBER: Most homeowners don't know anything about pool construction. All they know and understand is to "look at the pictures." If the pictures are pretty, then they will presume that "you build pretty pools." And after all, when you get right down to it, isn't that pretty much what most homeowners are looking for in the first place? A "pretty pool"?

BOTTOM LINE: If you want to SELL MORE POOLS, and/or MAKE MORE MONEY on the number of pools you are currently selling, then you will need to "step it up" with your website.

CRUCIAL MARKETING SECRET #5

"Nurture Your Prospects to Buy from You."

HIS, in my opinion, has to be the single most powerful marketing secret you could ever hope to harness. It is also—paradoxically—either the BEST KEPT or WORST EXECUTED secret of marketing. Because even though it's kind of a no-brainer, "DUH, that's a good idea" concept, almost NOBODY does it. (Which, by the way, is one of the reasons it's so powerful.)

I'm referring to the simple concept of FOLLOW-UP.

Now before you get ahead of me, and think "Oh, I've already got this nailed", let me clarify a couple of things:

- I'm not talking about the rudimentary act of "having your sales rep follow-up with cold leads." That's a manual process that (1) only hits a small number of your prospects, and (2) gets abandoned as soon as the sales reps get busy, and (3) isn't really all that effective anyway.
- And seriously, almost NOBODY does it effectively, so chances are EXCELLENT that you're not doing it nearly as well as you should.

And let me also emphasize that when I say "Crucial Marketing Secrets", I really do mean CRUCIAL. And here's why.

First of all, we know that the decision to consider and eventually purchase a swimming pool is not an overnight event. **As we've already said, most people spend MONTHS, if not YEARS, dreaming about and evaluating this decision.** So to think that "a few weeks of follow-up" is going to have a big impact on a pool buyer is simply delusional.

Secondly, because people spend so many years THINKING about a pool before BUYING, that means there is a HUGE number of "future buyers" in the market, compared to the small handful of "now buyers" who are actually ready to purchase today. Most of those "future buyers" are NOT looking for any interaction with a sales rep. They're just looking for useful information that will help educate themselves on their long journey toward eventually buying a swimming pool.

Which leads to the third reason your follow-up is so vitally important. If a "future buyer" visits your website and request some free info from you, and then 18 months later finally decides they're ready to move forward with their pool project, who are they going to call? Well, if they haven't heard or seen anything from you in 18 months, then it's probably not you. More likely, they'll call whichever pool builder has been in communication with them most regularly, and most recently.

Conversely, if you maintained some sort of email and/or direct-mail relationship with this future buyer over that same 18 month period, then two things would happen. First, they would be much more inclined to think of you first. But secondly, and more importantly, they would know a lot more about you—even if you've never actually met—because of all the information you sent via email and postcards. So the fourth reason you should implement auto-follow-up with future buyers is to slowly, quietly and gently persuade educate and "sell" them on choosing you.

Which leads to the fifth reason—by proactively nurturing your relationships with all these "future buyers", you're building a pipeline of new leads who are predisposed to calling YOU when they're finally ready to buy. **That means they will likely IGNORE all your competitors, which you must admit is nothing short of A DREAM COME TRUE when it comes to marketing.** That's why I said in the first place that this is potentially the most powerful marketing secret you could ever harness.

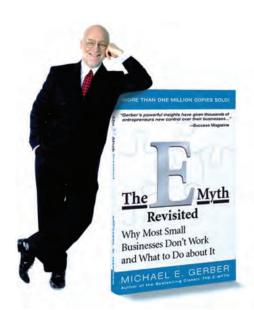
So if this concept of "follow-up" is so gosh darn great, why doesn't everyone do it?

Frankly speaking, it's hard. It's hard to find someone on your team who can consistently and repeatedly make the time to scratch out a note or shoot out an email to all these future buyers week after week. Receptionists and sales managers get busy, and you certainly shouldn't expect your sales people to do it, because "future buyers" are just a distraction from what salespeople should REALLY be doing, which is meeting with "now buyers."

That's why you have to come up with a system that is AUTOMATED. As Michael Gerber famously states in *The E-Myth Revisited*:

"In order for any business to succeed, it must first become a SYSTEM, so that the business functions exactly the same way every time... down to the last detail."

If you're ready to systematize and automate your followup with prospects, the first step is to purchase an email system such as AWeber, Constant Contact, Infusionsoft, or Vertical Response. These systems will allow you to create a special "contact us" webform which you (or your website person) can install on your website. Then whenever a prospect makes an inquiry through your website, all of their contact info will automatically be loaded into your database the moment they sign up.



The next step is to create a series of helpful emails which will be automatically delivered to these new prospects over the next 3 to 6 months, or whatever time frame you choose. Writing can be challenging, so to help you avoid writer's block, I suggest you try to put together some emails based on any or all of the following subject lines:

- "Thank you for your request!" (to be sent immediately after the inquiry)
- "Here's why a new pool costs less to own."
- "Here's how a modern pool takes care of itself."
- "Here's how to choose the right pool builder..."
- "Look at what people are doing to their backyards today..."
- "Have you seen these unusual swimming pool features?"
- "Here's why swimming pool owners tend to be healthier than everyone else."
- "Have you met our owner?"
- "Don't think we've forgotten about you..."

Now if you're really serious about automating your follow-up, you could ALSO add a series of postcards or other direct-mail pieces to your process. But you'll have to choose an email CRM system that also has direct-mail capabilities, which is somewhat rare. Three systems that I know of include Infusionsoft, Vertical Response, and eSentAll. (Infusionsoft is by far the most capable, but also rather expensive, and complicated to learn. eSentAll, while not as sophisticated, is much more reasonably priced, and provides MOST of the features you'll want.)

BOTTOM LINE: Setting up an automatic follow-up system is complicated and challenging, but that's also one of the reasons it's so incredibly powerful. If you can harness "Crucial Pool Builder Marketing Secret #5", you'll have a huge advantage over all your competition.

(**NOTE**: MYM Austin offers a turnkey auto follow-up system for pool builders. For more information, go to our website here.)

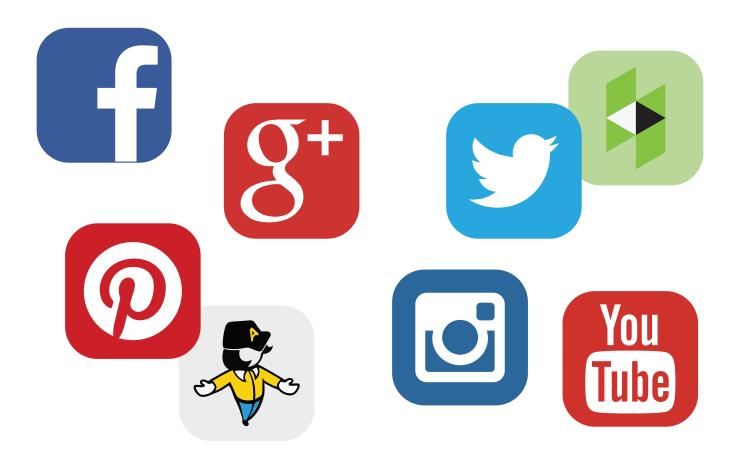


et's move on now to what is perhaps the MOST CONTESTED bit of marketing advice I can offer to any pool builder:

"Yes, there is potential benefit to using Social Media, but chances are you're doing it WRONG."

The reason this subject tends to be "contested" is because there is a cadre of marketing consultants in the world who are blindly preaching that "Social media is everything!" and "You should be spending at least one hour a day on social media." They encourage you to embrace ALL social media, no matter what business or industry you're in, and no matter what impact that has on your ability to run the REST of your business.

But if they really understood social media, they would understand that **the social media recommendations for POOL BUILDERS vs. RETAILERS vs. SERVICE COMPANIES should in fact be dramatically DIFFERENT**. Which is why I'm going to give you very SPECIFIC recommendations, based on the line of business you're in:



Pool Builders SHOULD:

- Create a Facebook page, and post daily updates of all your different jobs in progress. And TAG your homeowners in the photos you take of their backyards. (That will send them an email notification, which would then naturally inspire them to "like" and "share" your photos with all of THEIR friends.) I explained this in more detail in my blog post here.
- Do the same thing with Google+. (Click here for more advice about how you should use Google+).
- Create a HOUZZ account, and post your very best photos. (It's ALSO perfectly fine to do this with Flickr and Pinterest, but it won't have near the power of Houzz.) Click here for details on how to use HOUZZ.
- Create and proactively manage an account with AngiesList. (Note—I didn't say ADVERTISE with AngiesList; I'm just talking about setting up your free account.) More detailed advice about what to do with AngiesList here.
- **Update ALL of your online accounts** (including the ones mentioned above, plus Yelp, Bing, Yahoo, Merchant Circle, YP.com, and many more) with accurate and interesting information about your company. This includes good-looking photos and nice videos, if you have them.
- Make sure that all of the great videos that you posted on YouTube and elsewhere are ALSO on your website.

Some Things Pool Builders Should NOT Do:

- **Don't try to SELL anything on social media.** In fact, you really shouldn't even BRAG on social media, because it's a turnoff in print just as much as it is in person.
- Don't encourage people to LEAVE your website to go visit your social media pages. (They may never come back!)
- Don't feel compelled to waste time with Twitter or Instagram, because you and I both know that the only people following your tweets are your friends, family, industry associates and your competitors. (Now if by chance you happen to be that one rare person who is so incredibly popular in your market that you have at least 100 POTENTIAL POOL BUYERS who are LOCAL and ALREADY signed up to receive your tweets and messages AND you've actually found interesting things to tweet that THEY care about, then I'd like to meet you, congratulate you, and buy you a beer.)

Retailers:

- Retailers are the one exception where you might actually want to promote items for sale through your social media—especially Facebook, Google+, and Twitter. That's because your followers are most likely "loyal/repeat customers" who in fact ARE interested in what you sell. And if you've got a unique product coming in, or special sale coming up, then your loyal customers would probably be delighted to hear about it.
- Retailers should also "Update All of Your Online Accounts", as described about six paragraphs back.

Service Companies:

- Truth be told, the smartest "social communication" a SERVICE company can
 do would be to send regular emails (yes, good old-fashioned emails) to all of your
 customers and prospects on a monthly basis, and share with them your good advice
 about how to take proper care of their pool.
- Service companies can ALSO potentially use Twitter to stay in contact with their clients. But you should recognize that (1) a 260-character tweet isn't going to be near as effective as a "non-space restricted" email, and (2) in most cases, your tweet is just going to direct them to a webpage or email anyway. Thus, if you think you need to tweet, then you should FIRST make sure you are sending out salient emails, and then SUPPLEMENT those email blasts with Tweets.

Some Final Social Media Tips for Everyone:

- Don't expect miracles from your social media efforts.
- If you "subcontract" your social media posts, don't expect to have very many followers. (Most people can sniff out the disingenuous nature of "hired puff posts.")
- If you haven't figured out how to make Twitter work for you, then don't expect Instagram or Pinterest to work for you, either. (Again, the secret is "you have to have followers." And if you have followers, why not just send them an email?)
- **Don't get political.** Unless, of course, your goal is to disenchant fully one-third to two-thirds of your target market.

Also remember that—*like any other form of advertising*—social media is only going to reach ONE segment of your target market. If you are trying to generate new leads, then you should be using MULTIPLE media and venues to reach the majority of your target market.

"What about using Social Media to improve my SEARCH ENGINE rankings?"

It's true that social media activity CAN have a positive impact on your search engine rankings. **But don't fall for the hype that** "this is the way to trick Google, and get yourself on page one." That's because (1) social media activity is but one of more than 100 different things that Google looks at when "ranking" you. And (2) NO ONE (except maybe Google) knows how much "weight" Google gives social media today, nor does anyone know how much weight they're going to give it tomorrow. And (3) don't forget "the universal rule of Google", which is that as soon as someone figures out how to manipulate the system and trick Google, Google will figure it out and punish everyone who tries.

BOTTOM LINE: Social Media CAN help you, but unless you're doing it INTELLIGENTLY, as described above, you're probably doing it WRONG.

CRUCIAL MARKETING SECRET #7 "How to Convert More Pool Prospects into Buyers."

think it's fitting that we wrap up by talking about "converting prospects into buyers." Because in the end, if these marketing efforts don't eventually result in CASH IN YOUR POCKET, then we've all been wasting our time. So let's talk about some relatively small-yet-powerful things you can do that will have a definite positive impact on your closing ratios. Let's talk about:

Three marketing tactics that will improve your closing ratios, and convert more of your prospects into buyers.

When it comes to converting more of your prospects into pool buyers, there are really just three areas you need to focus on: YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS, YOUR SALES TOOLS, AND YOUR SELLING SKILLS. So let's talk about each of these.

MARKETING TACTIC #1: GREAT PHOTOGRAPHS

If ever "a picture told 1000 words", I think it would have to be in the pool industry.

Because by contrast, I don't think that photographs will play a crucial role in selling a new car.

Or a TV. Or a piano. Or new living room furniture. Or a fur coat.

Oh sure, photographs will help. **But you would almost never buy a car without driving it first.** Or a TV without watching it. Or a piano without playing it. Or living room furniture without sitting on it. Or a fur coat without touching it and trying it on.

But that's not happening with a new pool. You can't touch it, or smell it, or drive it, or put it on. You have little choice other than to look at the drawings and photographs, and then try to imagine what that (or something LIKE that) is a going to look like in your backyard.

So if you're counting on photographs to help sell your product—and you ARE—then DON'T SKIMP on the quality of your photos.

Yes, the single most straight-forward thing you could do to improve your closing ratios is to START TAKING BETTER PHOTOGRAPHS.

And I can prove it. Just take a look at some of these incredible photographs from our friends over at Lewis Aquatech. And then tell me whether you think (1) the potential pool buyer is still concerned about their ability to build a great product, and (2) whether their clients ever ask them for a \$5000 discount. Yes, I'll bet Lewis Aquatech spends more than you

do to get a good photograph. But what an investment! **Just imagine how much easier your sales process would be if the next time you sat down with a homeowner, you could whip out some beautiful 8 x 10 color glossy photographs like those from Lewis Aquatech.** (By the way—I have another short e-book with a complete set of tips on how to take high-quality swimming pool photograph yourself. You can get that on my **blog post here**.)

MARKETING TACTIC #2: TELL A GREAT STORY

You may recall that in "Crucial Marketing Secret #2" I pointed out that "To the average homeowner, you look like everyone else." And thus, until you clearly articulate how you are unique and different and better than your competition, you will be doomed to perpetual price competition with everyone else. That's why you need to have "A Great Story."

On my website, I refer to this as "Your Identity." And I call the process of CREATING that content as "Uncovering Your Story." If you want more details, you can read about it on my website. But here's the essence of it:

You have to communicate to your prospects that YOU are the superior choice, and say it in a way that is INTERESTING, BELIEVABLE, and COMPELLING.

If you want to try this yourself, here's a tip: Think of this as if you're going to court. You're going to have to stand before a judge and jury, and try to convince them with compelling and believable facts why YOUR company is the better choice. Think about what you would have to say to convince an unbiased judge and jury in your favor. THAT becomes your "story/identity."



Once you've created your "Story/Identity", you'll then find it very easy to produce any and all of the following valuable "sales tools":

- A brochure.
- A DVD script.
- An "on hold" message.
- A compelling "elevator pitch."
- A "10 reasons people love us" insert.
- And a ton of good content to go on your website—starting with your "About Us" page.

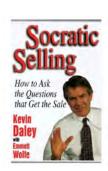
By the way—did you notice how your brochure, your DVD and your website all benefit from BOTH of these marketing tactics? In THIS industry, you really need both a "compelling story" and "great photographs" to create powerful sales tools.

MARKETING TACTIC #3: SALES TRAINING

Sorry to disappoint you if you were looking for something cooler, sexier and more exciting than "sales training." But as much as I might like to believe that "marketing rules the world," the truth is that a ton of great marketing strategies, tactics and sales tools can all still be destroyed in one fell swoop with lousy salesmanship. So I highly recommend that "sales training" be an ongoing part of any pool builder's overall marketing plan—especially if you're not happy with your current closing ratios.

There are a lot of different sales training opportunities out there, from both inside and outside our industry. And it's been my experience that NONE of them are perfect for EVERYONE, yet ALL of them will provide you with at least SOME new insights or inspiration, even if you've been through the training before.

I do have one particular "sales training" recommendation that I think might in fact be perfect for EVERYONE. Of all the sales classes I've taken, and all the sales books I've read, there is ONE BOOK that I believe provides a solid foundation and inspiration for ALL salespeople, no matter what you sell. It's Socratic Selling—How to Ask the Questions That Get the Sale by Kevin Daley. Less than \$20 through Amazon, and available at most any decent bookstore.



So there you have them—my three major tactics for improving your closing ratios:

- 1. Get some sales training.
- 2. Make sure you've got "a good story to tell".
- 3. And make sure you've got some killer photographs that really communicate how awesome your company is.

Contact Us Now

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- <u>fin</u> <u>LinkedIn</u>
- YouTube YouTube

In Closing...

et me congratulate you for taking the time to read through all seven "Crucial Marketing Secrets for Pool Builders." To recap, here's what we've learned:

- 1. Buying a Swimming Pool Is a Big Deal.
- 2. To the Average Homeowner, You Look Like Everyone Else.
- 3. REFERRALS are the best leads of all, but you don't have to BRIBE or BEG to get them.
- 4. Your Online Image Is A Lot More Important Than You Think.
- 5. You Should NURTURE Your Prospects to Buy from YOU.
- Social Media Can Help, but You're Probably Doing It Wrong.
- 7. Use PHOTOS, a GREAT STORY, and SALES TRAINING to convert more of your prospects into BUYERS.

When you understand and implement these "7 Crucial Marketing Secrets Every Pool Builder Should Know", you should be soundly on the path of running a highly successful pool construction business. And that, my friend, is my goal, and the purpose of this e-book. Now, I hope you sell a LOT more pools!

SPECIAL FREE OFFERS FOR YOU AND YOUR WEBSITE

SPECIAL OFFER #1:

If you're not sure whether your website needs help or not, send an email to info@poolbuildermarketing.com, and say that you want a copy of our FREE "Website Evaluation Tool." It's a simple, easy-to-use Excel spreadsheet that will make you the equivalent of an expert website critic in less than 10 minutes.

SPECIAL OFFER #2:

If you'd rather not waste time trying to do this yourself, then send an email to info@poolbuildermarketing.com, and request a FREE 1:1 WEBSITE EVALUATION with me. It will take about 20 minutes or so, and require that you be in front of a computer. (I will do this at no charge for as long as my schedule allows. But they must be scheduled in advance, so please identify a time window that will work for you, and I will do my best to accommodate.) Be sure to mention that you read about this free offer in my e-book, because we normally charge for this service.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If the preceding insights have inspired you to take action to improve your marketing, then I applaud you. If you're looking for assistance with any of the above, then I can assure you there is no company in the world better equipped to help you than MYM Austin Inc.

As a marketing agency that works exclusively in the swimming pool industry, we have a unique advantage over all other options out there.

We've uncovered the industry-specific strategies and tactics that most outside agencies simply don't understand.

As a next step, you might want to consider contacting us to:

- Perform a formal professional website assessment for you.
- Perform a complete professional marketing assessment for you.
- And/or implement any of the strategies described in this e-book.

Just call us at 877-634-8787 (18-PROFITS-UP!) to see how MYM Austin can transform YOUR business. Or email us at info@PoolBuilderMarketing.com.

About MYM Austin

We're a licensed agency of the **Monopolize Your Marketplace™** system. Founded in 2002, we specialize in serving the marketing, advertising and business growth needs of the swimming pool construction industry. **We work exclusively with swimming pool builders and high-end landscape professionals throughout North America and beyond. Meet Our People**. With a team of more than a dozen experienced professionals and advisers, these experts support our MYM operations in the areas of **strategic and tactical marketing management**, **website design and management**, **paid and organic search engine optimization**, **copywriting**, **graphic design** and more.

WHO WE WORK WITH...

We specifically look for high-integrity, customer-centric pool builders who build a great product, but aren't getting all the business or profit they want. If you find yourself frequently competing on price, or bogged down by the hassles of managing your own marketing, then you definitely should take a look at what our system does for you.

On the other hand, if you've got a track record of unhappy customers, unfinished pools or bankruptcies, then we're probably not right for each other. **We're not interested in using marketing to cover up gross deficiencies in a company's products or services.** It's too hard, it's not honest, and it won't work in the long run anyway.

Due to the competitive nature of the MYM system, we normally work with just a few pool builders in any particular region. In larger markets, we may sign an "exclusive agreement" with a particular client, which means we won't work with any other builders in that marketplace.

If you would like a FREE no-obligation review of your website or other advertising or marketing materials, please call or send an email. We normally schedule these reviews for Thursdays or Fridays. You should plan on 30 minutes up to an hour, and be near a computer with an Internet connection.

MYM Austin Inc./"Marketing for Pool Builders" 877-634-8787 (18-PROFITS-UP!)





877-634-8787 PoolBuilderMarketing.com