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Smart marketing decisions for the upcoming season

By **Brett Lloyd Abbott**

Have we finally put the pandemic behind us? I'm not sure anyone can confidently predict that. But I'm fairly confident about the following predictions:

- Demand will remain strong for new pools, most likely for the next 12 to 24 months.
- But that demand will gently taper off throughout the season, just as we saw in 2021/2022.
- And shortages in materials and human resources will continue to challenge the industry.

With that in mind, I offer the following "marketing checklist" to make sure you are as prepared as possible for what's ahead of us in the swimming pool industry.

Let's start with the most basic of marketing requirements – your website.

For those few internet laggards who still haven't gotten the memo, you need to (1) have one, and (2) make sure the hosting is "secure".

(To confirm whether or not your website is secure, just click the little "lock" icon at the top of your browser, to the left of your URL.)

And (3), your website should also look clean and modern, and be fairly easy to navigate.

Why? Because in this industry, most of our prospects will visit a company's website before picking up the phone. If the website is clunky, out-of-date, not secure, or non-existent, you will likely lose that prospect before the first phone call.

The second basic marketing fundamental is to "tell a good story". We're overwhelmed with too many options, and too many decisions to make. So give us a darn good reason to choose your company over the competition, and we will happily bestow you with our loyalty and our money.

Why? Because if you leave out the compelling story, and feed us empty, meaningless platitudes instead, we will be unimpressed, and simply choose whoever has the lowest price.



"The second basic marketing fundamental is to 'tell a good story'."

The two suggestions above are basic marketing fundamentals that every business owner should have embraced at least 10 years ago. So let's move on to the marketing plans and strategies that will help us deal with the unique challenges of 2022 and beyond.

Automation

Automation is fast becoming the next "must-have" marketing item for anyone in the pool industry, and any other industry that is currently overwhelmed with demand. That's because many business owners are just too darn busy to even answer the phone, much less spend 30 minutes talking to every prospect that suddenly got the bright idea to get a new pool or pool renovation.

Automated marketing can send a variety of emails and text messages to set and manage expectations from the get-go, without you ever lifting a finger. And it's not just for prospects. You can also use automation to nurture clients through the construction process, and long after the project is completed. And again, this can all happen without any involvement from you.

ABOVE: Thinking smart will keep the work flowing

(For more on this topic see “Controlling the flood of information with automation” in SPLASH! Edition 138).

To implement automation properly and effectively, you will likely need to adopt the use of a client relationship management (CRM) system as well. I must say I was shocked a few years ago when I surveyed over 100 pool builders in the US and discovered the number one most popular method of tracking sales opportunities was a piece of paper and a pen. And the second most popular method was “none”.

“Platforms such as Facebook and Houzz can be a great source for both paid and organic leads.”

We are better than this! With sales opportunities well-exceeding \$50,000 each, and the inherently scattered nature of trying to manage an overflow of leads, I simply can't imagine running a pool construction business without a professional CRM in place.

There are plenty of good CRM options out there to choose from. (For more on this look to SPLASH! Edition 141 article: “Customer relationship management more important than ever”.)

Digital marketing is likely to become a lot more popular in the 2022/2023 season for two reasons. First, as noted previously, the overall lead flow in our industry is beginning to decline. So if you want to maintain your current level of operations, you may need to start feeding that sales funnel. Secondly, the highly-targeted pay-per-click side of digital marketing can be laser-tuned to appeal to your ideal target market. This will help protect your sales team (or yourself) from wasting time with so many tyre-kickers who never should have called you in the first place.

The next smart marketing decision for the coming season is to get a lot more serious about video. If you've created the occasional “how to” videos, or some drone videos showing off your work, that's fine. But I'm talking about a different kind of video. There's a lot of leverage to be gained from a well-produced video that tells your compelling story in an engaging and intelligent way. Not only will a well-crafted video help generate more leads from your website, it will also prequalify and educate your ideal prospects in advance. It will also help to filter out those mismatched prospects who would be wasting your time.

And last but not least is social media. Platforms such as Facebook and Houzz can be a great source for both paid and organic leads. But what I believe is significantly more important right now is to make sure your online reputation is solid. Just like a clunky website will stop people from calling you, a few bad reviews will prevent many people from ever getting to your website in the first place. So this is no time for “out-of-sight, out-of-mind.” If you don't have someone monitoring your online reputation in-house, then I suggest you find someone outside to handle it for you.

The bottom line

The 2022-2023 season is likely to be challenging, but in somewhat different ways from the past two years. So if you're ready to finally get off that hamster wheel and get ahead of the sales/marketing curve, then this is the year to tighten up the loose ends described above, and make some smart marketing decisions. ■

These articles by Pool Builder Marketing's Brett Lloyd Abbott's are designed to provide pool companies with unique insights that will help them address modern marketplace challenges.

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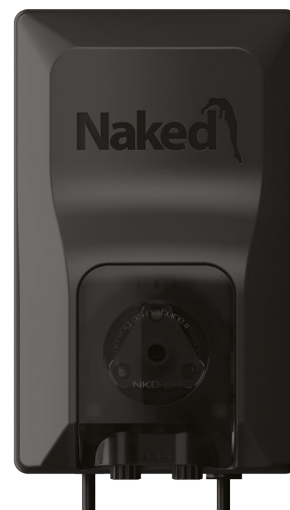


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