



Going Commercial: Marketing



Meet your market

Find ways to get out in front of current and potential customers to boost your business.

Bob Grover, president of Pacific Landscape Management in Portland, Oregon, says he's cheap, but with a customer base primarily made up of large commercial accounts, it comes in handy with marketing strategies.

“We don’t advertise,” he says. “We’re trying to get our message out with interactions through people.” For a landscaping business that has a focus on commercial accounts, Grover suggests a healthy mix of self-promotion, networking and dedication to enhancing marketing efforts.

“I like to try to find things that I can do that are effective that don’t (cost) money, so that I can spend money working on my service or potentially creating a profit for my organization,” he says.

If you want people to think you’re great, Grover says you probably have to tell them. And he doesn’t worry that it might come across as arrogant. “You can do it in a variety of ways, and it’s usually pretty free,” he says. “If you do good work and no one knows you’re doing good work, it’s really hard to get credit for it.”

Through this type of self-promotion marketing, Grover has been able to get his company recognized on the street, in industry magazines and on popular business lists.

BE VISIBLE.

“The first thing I did – the first truck I bought – I created a brand with it,” he says. “Whether it’s your truck or your uniforms, do something that makes you visible.”

Pacific Landscape Management is known for its orange branding from the trucks, to the uniforms to even some of the equipment. Grover’s “team orange” strategy has led people to recognize his company as they drive from job to job.

“We refer to ourselves as ‘team orange’ because everything we do is around that orange color. It was our most identifiable trait early on,” he says. Grover says that some of the larger national companies are transitioning to a color-focused solution for their vehicle branding too.

The orange theme doesn’t end there. At marketing events, the company hands out oranges or orange candy. “Halloween is our favorite holiday,” he says. “We can find and buy a lot of orange things to hand out.”

The company even carries the color scheme into its proposals. Grover says he saves money by using a publishing software to design marketing materials and proposals.

“Today, everyone’s got a color copy machine in the office,” he says. “And I’m not even a super high-tech guy.” Grover says the proposals at Pacific Landscape Management focus on images and colors, since that’s what catches the attention of clients.

The company has even implemented a newsletter, and as technology has improved, it has been adapted to keep up with the push toward digital content.

“We’ve had a newsletter since the beginning,” he says. “Early on, it was printed. We paid to have it printed but then started printing it ourselves, but it’s all been focused on color. We’ve gone to an online weekly newsletter, and I try to make sure that our logo is at the top with a picture and a headline. I’m not sure people scan down below the preview screen, so I want them to get the idea of what I’m trying to say through the visualization.”

The information for these stories was taken from a virtual conference hosted by Lawn & Landscape magazine. To see all of the presentations, visit bit.ly/llcommvc.

GO WHERE YOUR CLIENTS ARE.

Being visible isn’t just about a bright color scheme. Grover dedicates a lot of time to attending community events and board meetings. In order to narrow down the best places to dedicate time, Grover found out where ideal clients spent most of their time.

Most of Pacific Landscape Management’s customers belong to the Institute of Real Estate Management (IREM). Grover says when attending IREM events, sometimes existing clients can introduce him to potential new

clients, which can be a hard barrier to break through in the commercial sector. Another useful organization Grover pays attention to is the Building Owners and Managers Association.

“BOMA is a close second (to IREM) for us,” he says. “There are a lot of property managers.”

He also tries to get involved in events and associations that will draw a lot of facility managers. Attending expositions and tradeshow will help get face time with potential clients. Grover has even participated in golf tournaments and monthly meetings.

While at these events, Grover always makes a point to seek out the most important person in the room and introduce himself.

Outside of the industry, it's also worthwhile to get involved with the local chamber of commerce.

"You can't just join the organization," he says. "You have to be involved, go to their events and get involved in the communities."

BRING CLIENTS TO YOU.

Showing your clients appreciation throughout the year can have a lasting impact. At Pacific Landscape Management, the team hosts social events where the clients get to be the guests.

Grover has found "lunch and learns" to be a hit.

"We tell them we can come in and help them and their property managers learn a little bit more about landscaping," he says. "So we bring them to lunch and it's a really great one-on-one with an individual property management group."

Happy hour events have also served the company well. Grover says they probably host two happy hours for every lunch and learn.

And, while it takes a bit more time and organization, Pacific Landscape Management also hosts a wine tour for its customers. The company provides a bus to a winery and spend the afternoon networking and tasting wine.

Hosting an open house draws a lot of people, too. It gives them a chance to show off and clients get to see first-hand how Pacific Landscape Management operates.

"I try to make it a social event," Grover says. "It's an excuse to get (clients) to come out and we can get a little bit of credit for the things we do."



Lauren Rathmell