

**WHY**  
YOUR HVAC, PLUMBING,  
OR ELECTRICAL BUSINESS  
PROBABLY WON'T HIRE THE  
**MARKETING DIRECTOR**  
IT NEEDS

GETTING A LOT MORE EXPERTISE FOR A LOT LESS MONEY

A white paper for contractors from Tracy Paul, Principal  
**CORNERSTONE ADVERTISING & MARKETING**

**CORNERSTONE**  
ADVERTISING 

# TELL ME QUICK!

If it's hard to find time to focus on ideas for transforming your business, we understand. But investing just a few minutes to read this will change your way of thinking ... and doing business.

Too many HVAC, plumbing, or electrical contractors spend their days chasing a never-ending to-do list and trying to match staffing with business levels. They see marketing as an annoyance and think hiring someone -- anyone -- to make all those little decisions will let them concentrate on the more important stuff.

**Yet hiring a marketing director may be one of the worst business mistakes you can make.** There's a better approach that will take all that marketing stuff out of your hands, help you better align staffing and business, sharpen your sales efforts, and create the constant flow of new customers your business needs to grow. It's not a magic solution ... and it's worked again and again for dozens of your peers.

# **MAYBE** YOU REALLY DON'T NEED TO HIRE A MARKETING DIRECTOR

## **WHAT SEEMS LIKE A SMART IDEA RARELY SUCCEEDS**

Nearly every owner of a growing HVAC, plumbing, or electrical business makes a decision they shouldn't. As their sales and staff increase, their workdays get longer and the number of tasks competing for their attention grow. Many of those tasks are critical -- from finding new techs to funding payroll.

And then there's everything to do with marketing. It's rarely a favorite. Never as simple as it should be, and always more decisions than they want to have to make. An endless line of people trying to convince them to spend too much money for things that never seem to deliver. Streaming ads. Placards in grocery carts. Electronic signs. Travel mugs.

**You decide what you really need is a marketing director.** Someone to handle all those sales pitches from media and similar vendors, make the hundred annoying decisions each week, and drive more customers to call. Let the marketing director handle all those things you hate so you can focus more time on what really matters.

## WHO THEY GET

You look at the budget and set a salary for the marketing director somewhere in the middle of the range you pay your techs. Even then, the number seems awfully high for someone who's going to focus on all that inconsequential stuff. (Unfortunately, it's on the low side for people with marketing experience.)

So instead of a seasoned pro, you hire a nice kid who's a couple years out of college. They're young, so they obviously understand how to use social media. They know how make graphic design software work, and they've written some nice blog posts and poetry. **Their only knowledge about your industry involves adjusting a thermostat.** But that's okay, because they can learn, right?

You end up devoting far more time than you expect to "training" them, which is to say helping them understand exactly what your business does. They'll make some rookie mistakes that cost you money, fall for every sales pitch they hear, and keep deferring decisions to you.

## THE ENDLESS CYCLE OF MARKETING DIRECTORS

Eventually, they'll reach the point where you trust them to handle things on their own ... and that's when they'll take another job and you'll be back to square one.

If you've hired marketing directors, I'm willing to wager what I described sounds pretty familiar. It doesn't reflect of your skills as a business owner ... it's more the fact most successful contractors aren't marketing professionals. You don't know as much as you'd like, so your goal is to hire that knowledge. The people you hire are supposed to know what to do, right?

**Time and time again, I've seen contractors hire a constant procession of marketing directors. Each time one leaves, marketing activities grind to halt ... and when the replacement is hired, it's like starting all over.**

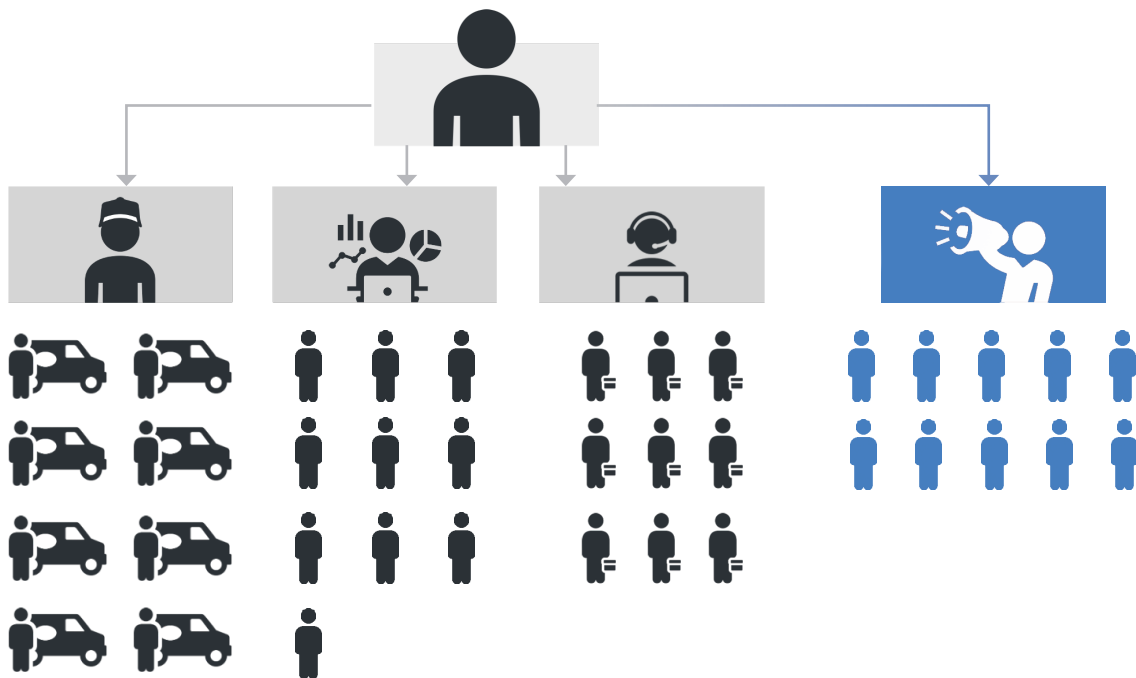


## WHAT DO YOU EXPECT?

When you hire any employee – whether it's your new marketing director or a service tech – you're seeking two things: experience and capability. With a tech, you can probably spot both right away. A five-minute conversation tells you whether you could send this candidate into a customer's home, because you understand exactly what the job entails.

With marketing directors, that becomes much hazier. **Too often, business owners say they're seeking "someone to run our marketing," which really isn't a specific task.** When seeking new techs, you'd never say you want to find someone who can "fix things." You'd instead say you want someone licensed and experienced at installing and servicing the equipment you sell, and able to make a customer confident that a \$400 repair will solve their problem.

That's how you need to think about specific roles that marketing director will serve. **Just as important, how will you know whether the person you hire is doing a good job, especially given how little you know about marketing?** If you say Goal #1 is to generate more leads, how will you measure that? What's your goal? ("More than last year" isn't a real goal.) How will you define what qualifies as a lead?



## JACK OF ALL TRADES

You're familiar with the expression "a Jack of all trades, but a master of none." Many HVAC, plumbing, and electrical business owners I've known characterize themselves that way. Running a busy company requires knowledge of a whole bunch of things and offers little time to become an expert in any of them.

**When owners hire marketing directors, they typically end up with a generalist who's good at a handful of tasks within the marketing universe.** They may know how to create social media posts that get attention, and they might be handy with blog posts, but what about other important skills? Do they really understand pay-per-click advertising? Search engine optimization? Buying radio and TV spots? Leveraging government and utility incentives to close a sale? How to create a website?

Put another way, there's a huge gulf between what owners want and need to accomplish their goals and what they're able to get for their budget. **So they settle for what they can afford and hope that person will be able to pick up at least some of the missing pieces.** Even if their marketing director is a nice person who does a good job with a handful of tasks, they probably can't perform at the level the business needs to grow and thrive.

## GROWING TOO SLOWLY

The home service industry is more competitive than it has ever been, and owners who have managed to build strong local businesses increasingly find themselves up against national competitors with marketing budgets that dwarf their own. Those competitors create attractive promotions and spread the word through memorable advertising, so they carve out an ever-growing share of your market.

Meanwhile, you're growing. Not as quickly as you'd like, but growing nonetheless. Unfortunately, because you're growing at a much slower rate, you're actually at risk of losing market share. You may think of yourself as the trusted name in your community, but you're seeing more and more of your competitor's service vans parked in front of local homes and businesses.

**You'll never be able to outspend the competition. But with the right help, you can outthink and outmaneuver them, allowing you to build upon your hard-earned reputation.** You can increase your market share, convert a bigger share of leads to sales, boost your average sale amount, and keep your team busy during the shoulder seasons. You just need the right marketing partner.

## AN ENTIRE MARKETING DEPARTMENT

Maybe you'll get lucky and find a marketing director who's experienced, brilliant, friendly, and willing to put in 80 hours a week for what you're willing to pay. Frankly, that probably won't happen.





## ALREADY HAVE THE MARKETING DIRECTOR OF YOUR DREAMS?

Guess you're one of the lucky ones. But you have one person, and one person can only know and do so much. That means they're probably either missing opportunities or racking up hefty bills from multiple subcontractors. The simple truth is even the best marketing directors are capable of handling only part of the job.

We help great marketing directors succeed by filling the gaps. We support what they know and advise them on the topics that aren't quite as familiar. We bring them ideas that have worked well for companies elsewhere.

In other words, if you're already impressed with what they do for you, just wait until you see what they can accomplish with our help.

So we'd like to suggest a practical (and proven) alternative: we'll provide an entire outsourced marketing department for less than the cost of a single full-time employee.

Let's say your sales are now between \$5 and \$8 million, and you've decided you can afford a \$90,000 marketing director -- which means you'll actually pay more like \$140,000 when you factor in benefits and employer taxes. **For less than that, we can put a complete marketing department to work for you.**

What will you get for that? For starters, writing services, design services, a pay-per-click specialist, an SEO specialist, a web developer, social media, media buying, reputation management, and more – **a team of eight or nine experienced experts who know your industry, delivering services through one marketing manager who treats your business like it was their own.** Even better, it's all coordinated, so you won't find yourself refereeing arguments between vendors.

## EXPERTISE & ECONOMICS

Each time you hire a marketing person, you lose time helping them understand the nature of what you sell and how the process works.

**We're already up to speed. Your Cornerstone Advertising team already knows what's involved in selling a heat pump.** We understand what it takes to





## FOCUSED ON YOUR LONG-TERM GOALS

Most important, we'll design your marketing program around your long-term goals. For example, we know many owners eventually plan to sell their businesses, so they're eager to increase the value of their operations. If that's your objective, we'll help you assemble a strategy to grow your company into one that will attract buyers willing to pay top dollar. We'll also provide insight to inform your decisions, so every step brings you closer to your goals.

move a prospect to better equipment with a higher price point. We know how to turn government incentives into powerful sales tools. We've developed successful strategies to address off-season slowdowns. And you gain the benefit of what we've learned working with dozens of other contractors in your industry, so you can count on a predictable lead flow.

**Working with us also creates consistency that helps you grow.** Instead of having to find a new marketing person every couple years and putting your efforts on pause while they get up to speed, your marketing program becomes an ongoing machine, capturing solid sales leads and helping you convert them into customers.

We'll help you own your local service area by growing your share of the places where your techs already work. Show you ways to close more sales all year long. Capture new customers just as they need to make big investments. There's an art to it, but it's mostly science and common sense. Why let someone else experiment with your money when we can deliver what works?

## ALREADY HAVE A MARKETING PERSON?

If you already have a marketing director or marketing manager, they have no need to worry about us. In fact, we'll make them more effective and improve their morale. Their role becomes overseeing our activities and serving as our representative within your company, sharing the information we need and carrying out internal aspects. They'll be able to focus on aspects of your business they currently don't have time to do, like pricing and creating marketing incentives for your team.

And if you haven't found the right marketing person, we can provide expertise there, too. We'll help you better define your needs and the role your hire will play so you don't waste time interviewing the wrong people. You'll hire better because you'll have a deeper understanding of what you need and what you can realistically expect.

## YOUR BEST HIRE ...

... might not be an employee. You can keep going like far too many contractors, stumbling from one marketing director to the next, never quite getting what you need – and losing people to better jobs after they've finally earned your trust and confidence.

Or you can stop and ask yourself whether it makes more sense to pay less and get more expertise and performance to show for it.

**As your outsourced marketing department, the Cornerstone team will be as focused on your success as you are.** We'll be happy to show you what we've done for other HVAC, plumbing, and electrical businesses throughout the U.S. and to answer your questions about how our team can help you succeed. Please reach out today!



## THE TOOLS AND EXPERTISE YOU NEED

What would our marketing team do for your business? Everything, actually. We have all the traditional and digital marketing and promotional services you need, from SEO to direct mail to truck design, all delivered through one account manager who treats your business as though it's theirs. Even better, we have a lot of practice with all of them. We know what works and what doesn't. We'll provide all this and more:

### ACCOUNT SERVICES

- ▶ Strategy
- ▶ Research
- ▶ Planning
- ▶ List Acquisition
- ▶ Direct Mail Purchasing
- ▶ Budgeting
- ▶ Analytics
- ▶ Resource Management & Execution
- ▶ Project Management

### BRANDING & MARKETING MATERIALS

- ▶ Logos
- ▶ Brand Style Guides
- ▶ Business Cards
- ▶ Brochures
- ▶ Sales Collateral
- ▶ Forms
- ▶ Vehicle Wraps
- ▶ Banners
- ▶ Packaging
- ▶ Posters & Illustrations

### DIGITAL PROMOTION

- ▶ PPC Advertising/Google LSA
- ▶ Website Design & Hosting
- ▶ SEO
- ▶ Blogs
- ▶ Email & Text Marketing
- ▶ Social Media Content & Advertising
- ▶ Online Reputation Management
- ▶ Online Directories
- ▶ Online Publications

### TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING

- ▶ TV
- ▶ OTT
- ▶ Cable
- ▶ Radio
- ▶ Direct Mail
- ▶ Magazines
- ▶ Newspaper
- ▶ Billboards
- ▶ Printed Directories
- ▶ Video
- ▶ Media Planning & Buying

# CORNERSTONE ADVERTISING

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Tracy Paul is principal owner and founder of Cornerstone Advertising Inc., where he has helped HVAC and plumbing contractors of all sizes grow and become market-dominant companies in cities throughout North America for more than 25 years. Cornerstone is a full-service marketing firm that includes both traditional and digital advertising for the home service industry, and gives contractors access to a complete marketing department for less than it costs to hire a full-time marketing director, using proven strategies delivered through an account manager who treats their business like it was their own.

Learn more at:

[www.cornerstonead.com](http://www.cornerstonead.com)