

# **THE** **HOME SERVICES** **MARKETING** **BLUEPRINT**

**WHAT'S WORKING, WHAT ISN'T, AND  
HOW TO BUILD A MARKETING STRATEGY**

**A WHITE PAPER FROM TRACY PAUL, PRINCIPAL,  
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ADVERTISING 



## **TELL ME QUICK!**

**Those marketing “secrets” you see online may work in other industries, but they nearly always fall short in home services.**

The reason? You're in a business where most customers never give you a second thought — until they have what they consider an urgent need. And when that happens, they don't spend a lot of time comparison-shopping for a company to solve their problem. Instead, they immediately call the first name they see as trustworthy.

The good news is you can increase the chances your business will be visible, trusted, and top-of-mind when those homeowners reach out — but only if you follow the right strategy.

# THE HOME SERVICES MARKETING BLUEPRINT

## WHAT'S WORKING, WHAT ISN'T, AND HOW TO BUILD A MARKETING STRATEGY

Our nation has millions of homeowners. It's a safe bet that there's not even one who wakes up in the morning and decides, "I think I'll have to replace my heat pump today."

Whether it's HVAC, plumbing, electrical, roofing, siding, or windows, homeowners don't shop for the services you offer casually and leisurely. They might be aware when it's time to replace their car or their refrigerator, but the only time they consider reaching out to you is when something breaks, leaks, stops working, or suddenly feels unsafe.

**That makes marketing in the home services industry fundamentally different from marketing in any other consumer category.** In your world, nearly every call is for a matter the homeowner considers urgent. Each of those calls present an opportunity to make a sizable sale — but only if your company is visible, trusted, and top-of-mind at the exact moment a homeowner decides to reach out. How do you make sure that happens consistently?

## IT'S TOUGHER THAN JUST FIVE YEARS AGO

Five years ago, your marketing may have been hitting on all cylinders. Covid pushed a lot of opportunities from 2022 and 2023 into 2020 and 2021. Sure, there were slow stretches here and there, but your team never sat around the shop for long. Business became pretty steady and many of you assumed it was going to stay that way.

Who could have guessed that the right way to grow business for a company like yours in 2026 would be completely different? Today, it's more complex and more sophisticated, thanks in large part to the arrival of artificial intelligence (AI). **Instead of fewer choices for your marketing investments, you have more of them, and what business owner has the time (or know-how) to keep up with all of them?**

From digital to traditional, to branding and more, there are dozens of categories, with a variety of choices in each. It's tough for owners like you to be completely confident about which channels work, which don't, and how you can know whether you're going to be wasting money or making a lot more of it.

The good news is that it's not hopeless. **Our outsourced marketing teams spend every day helping businesses like yours across the U.S. get the biggest bang for your budget.** We've been doing that for decades, so we've learned the best ways to make your marketing efforts more successful — and most of all, more profitable. We'll share what we're saying to our clients right now.



## YOU NEED A STRATEGY FOR DIGITALLY CAPTURING DEMAND

The best way to describe what marketers refer to as digital demand capture is that it represents the channels you use to get in front of homeowners at the exact moment they're searching for help for one of those urgent needs. Your strategy's effectiveness determines whether you win the job or lose it to a competitor (usually without knowing you were even in the running). When a furnace fails at 10 p.m. or a roof starts leaking during a storm, homeowners will call the first trustworthy company they find. Channels like these pay off at generating predictable numbers of appointments:



- **Google Local Services Ads (LSA).** Not getting to the top of Google search results? The right LSAs dominate search lists and connect advertisers to customers who want to book an appointment right now. With a pay-per-lead model, they allow you to improve your marketing's efficiency, and they have remarkably strong conversions when those customers are using mobile devices. Adding Google Guarantee creates immediate trust and making the most of LSA opportunities demands solid expertise and strong Google reviews.

- **PPC Search (Google & Bing).** You may have been using pay-per-click (PPC) strategies for years. PPC captures homeowners when they search for services such as "AC repair near me," "plumbing emergency," or "roof replacement estimate." They continue to work well for quickly driving the right kinds of appointments, can be targeted tightly, and are easy to scale. However, the most obvious search terms can get pretty costly, and trying for common but ineffective targets is like throwing money away. Most important, PPC won't be of much help if your landing pages are weak.

- **Retargeting.** This is a way to connect with homeowners who have already visited your site but failed to book an appointment. It makes sure you remain top-of-mind when they search again. While effective and affordable, retargeting doesn't generate new demand, and works best with sites that receive heavy traffic.

## ABOUT SHARE OF VOICE

Buying advertising for your business seems simple enough, but it's pretty complex. Sales reps show up with what look like great deals, and far too many business owners jump at the cheapest option.

Smart business owners focus instead on what's known as share of voice. **That's a measure of how much of a marketplace your branding "owns" as compared to your competitors.** If you're one of four local home services businesses that's using TV and the other three are outspending you, you have a comparatively tiny share of voice. When your prospective customers watch TV, they'll see far more of your competitors' brands than yours. That's important, because experts contend each of us sees as many as 10,000 marketing messages each day, and our brains filter the vast majority of them out.

When your customers are overwhelmed by marketing messages of all sorts, understanding and leveraging your share of voice allows you to make strategic choices that magnify the power of your budget. If everyone else is battling for TV viewers, maybe your brand belongs on the radio or in digital channels.

## ORGANIC VISIBILITY IS ONE OF YOUR MOST VALUABLE INVESTMENTS

**Paid advertising can be powerful, but when you stop paying, it stops working. Organic traffic is different, as it compounds over time and builds trust naturally.** Using local search engine optimization (SEO) ensures your company appears in Google Maps and search results when homeowners are trying to find solutions or compare contractors. Organic visibility efforts like these nearly always prove to be effective companions to paid media:



- **Website SEO.** The right SEO strategy not only delivers sustainable, compounding inbound traffic, but also positions your business and your brand as the local authority for what the homeowner needs. That helps you capture high-value traffic from homeowners doing research. SEO is a cost-effective way to create long-term growth and improve conversion across your other lead-generation efforts. On the downside, it can take longer to produce leads than other methods, and must be updated regularly to match changes in the search process.

- **Google Business Profile (GBP).** It might not seem like a big deal, but you'd be surprised how often your GBP is the first impression a homeowner gets of your business. It's also one of the most consistent drivers of phone calls from homeowners who are ready to book appointments. Best of all, it's free. GBP isn't perfect: if you don't have enough good reviews, you'll rank lower.

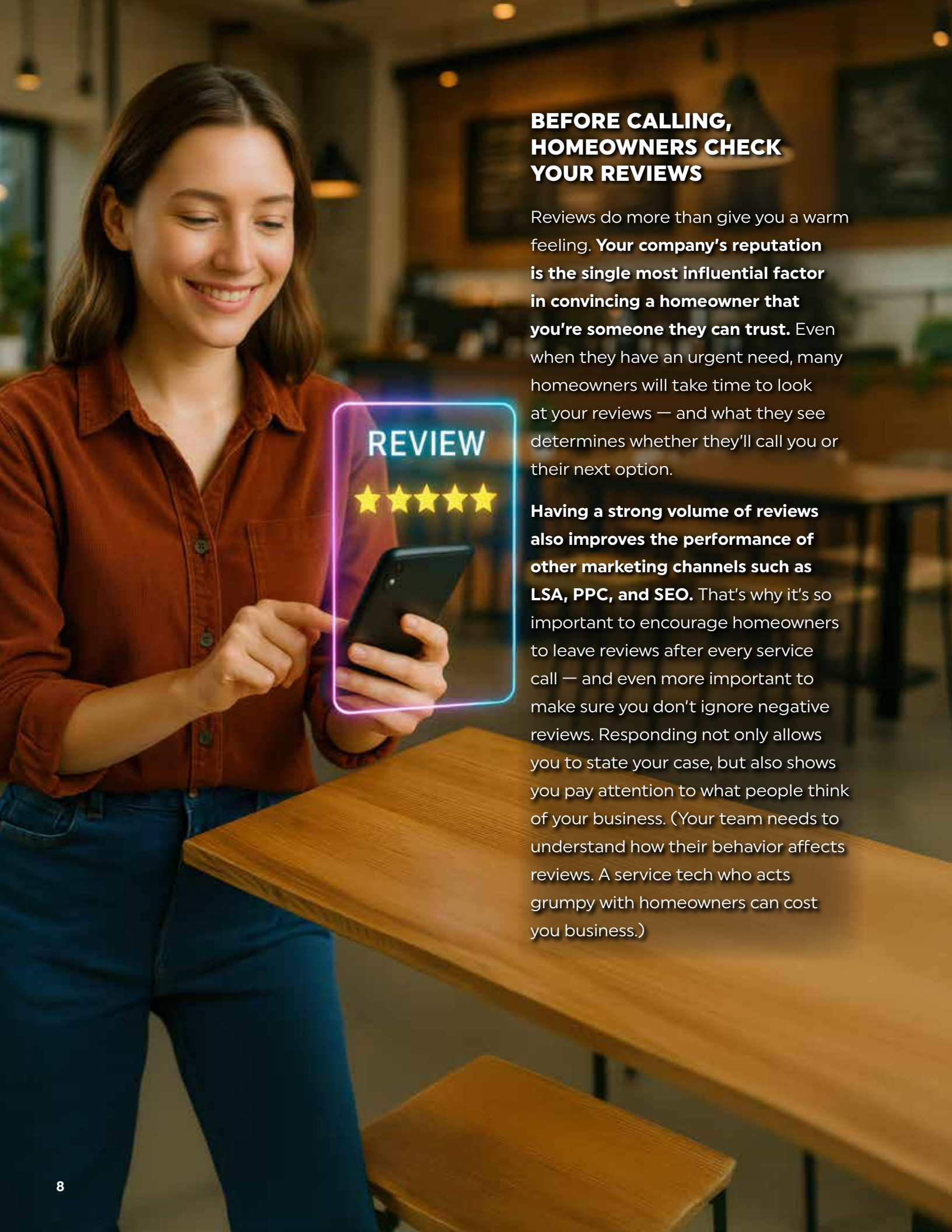
## **SOCIAL MEDIA SIGNIFICANTLY INFLUENCES HOMEOWNER PERCEPTION**

**While it's unlikely someone with a pressing need is going to search for businesses like yours on social media, what you post online becomes a powerful trust-building and brand awareness tool.** When used effectively, both organic and paid social media make your company feel more familiar, more credible, and more human — long before a homeowner needs a technician or an estimator.

- **Organic Social.** Posting information to your social media sites helps to build homeowner familiarity with your business, improving the likelihood that a homeowner will recognize and choose your name from search results. The right kind of content builds connection, personality, and credibility. Drawbacks include a need to post regularly and a typically lower lead volume. It can also be more difficult to identify social media's effect on revenue.

- **Paid Social.** Is useful for amplifying other promotional efforts, sharing testimonials, making potential customers aware of the availability of financing, and reinforcing your branding. While paid social can offer a high-visibility, low-cost way to make impressions that reinforce your brand, it's not likely to generate calls from homeowners with urgent needs. It can be highly effective for retargeting and promoting limited-time offers.





## **BEFORE CALLING, HOMEOWNERS CHECK YOUR REVIEWS**

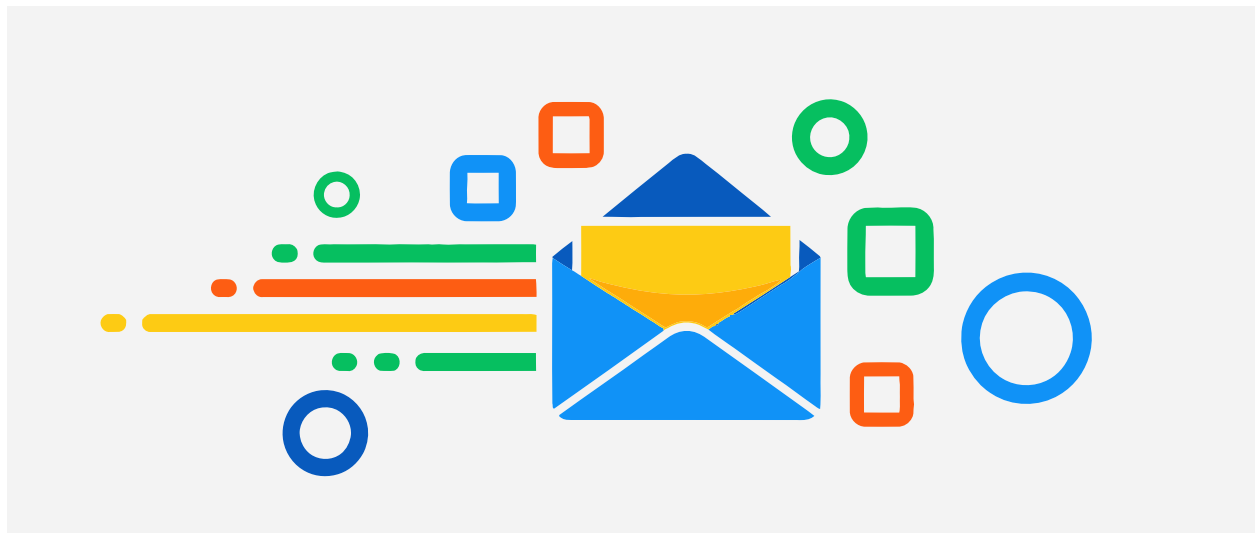
Reviews do more than give you a warm feeling. **Your company's reputation is the single most influential factor in convincing a homeowner that you're someone they can trust.** Even when they have an urgent need, many homeowners will take time to look at your reviews — and what they see determines whether they'll call you or their next option.

**Having a strong volume of reviews also improves the performance of other marketing channels such as LSA, PPC, and SEO.** That's why it's so important to encourage homeowners to leave reviews after every service call — and even more important to make sure you don't ignore negative reviews. Responding not only allows you to state your case, but also shows you pay attention to what people think of your business. (Your team needs to understand how their behavior affects reviews. A service tech who acts grumpy with homeowners can cost you business.)

## SQUEEZE MORE VALUE FROM LEADS WITH EMAIL AND SMS EFFORTS

Sometimes, homeowners aren't ready to act right now, even when they're faced with an urgent need. They may want to think about it for a few days or a couple weeks. You don't want them to forget about you while they're doing that thinking. That's where rehash and nurture programs using email and SMS messages can help. By gradually converting "not now" homeowners into "booked" ones, they allow you to mine more value from leads you've already paid for.

**Email and SMS nurture programs offer a remarkably high ROI by supporting reminder, retention, and even cross-sell efforts.** However, they only work well if you have a well-managed field management software (FMS) system. Overusing the strategy or sending bad messages can annoy homeowners and make them think you're trying to spam them.



## OUTBOUND KEEPS SCHEDULES FULL DURING SLOW STRETCHES

**One of the most overlooked yet powerful tactics, outbound marketing efforts, help you keep the schedule busy even during slow seasons.** It can also give you another shot at opportunities that were missed on the initial appointment. Outbound is particularly effective for high-ticket work. Using it well takes some skill and a bit of training, because a mismanaged outbound effort will frustrate customers to the point at which they'll turn to one of your competitors.

## THE RIGHT OFFER CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Even when homeowners have a pressing need, they want to be sure they got a good price. **Having attractive promotions can influence homeowner decision-making and improve conversion rates across multiple channels.** A good promotion also strengthens your competitive position when homeowners are trying to decide which company to call. Just make sure you use promotions wisely. If you overuse them, people are likely to assume your "special" is really just another way for presenting your regular price. And if you're already struggling to keep up with calls, delay using offers until business slows down, or you run the risk of disappointing customers with long delays or rushed work.



## MAINTENANCE AND REVIEWS: TWO CRITICAL TOOLS

Successful companies in your industry benefit from a variety of strategies, but nearly all of them emphasize two critically important tools to draw more new customers while strengthening relationships with existing customers.



### MAINTENANCE PLANS

Smart owners emphasize their preventive maintenance plans as a source of predictable revenues, a way to generate installations, and an effective strategy for keeping customers from calling your competitors. That's why they make sure their technicians mention maintenance plans at every service call, and why they provide an easy way to sign up on their websites.

Take a situation where your technician is performing a repair on a unit owned by a customer without the maintenance plan. "Ms. Jones, today's repair will cost \$200 ... but if you were a member of our Customer Club, it would only be \$150. If you want to join the club today, I can go ahead and take that \$50 off the cost."

### REVIEW PROGRAMS

Today, getting good reviews is more important than ever, because when a customer seeks help with a need online, average ratings pop up alongside the name of the business. If your technician simply performs the high-quality work you expect, the customer may or may not leave a review. But if that technician specifically asks them to leave a review and hands them a card with a QR code to access the review page, they're far more likely to respond.

It also gives the technician the opportunity to quickly gauge the customers' satisfaction. "One last thing before I leave, if I gave you five-star service today, I would really appreciate a good review. If I didn't give you five-star service, my boss wants to know that, too." Some owners reward the techs who generate the most reviews.

## TRADITIONAL MEDIA ISN'T DEAD

Everyone focuses on digital strategies these days, but the other ideas some people dismiss as old-fashioned continue to play big roles for savvy contractors.

**Traditional media's broad reach helps you build a brand homeowners will remember, making your digital strategies even more effective.** They're especially good for businesses that have crossed the \$5 million mark, helping them build their market share and dominate their regions.



## COUNTING ON ANGI ISN'T A STRATEGY

Working through Angi and other lead aggregators seems like an effortless way to drive leads. Once you set up your account and profile, you just sit back and wait for the calls to come, right? Using aggregators wisely and strategically can help you stabilize demand, but they rarely work well for a core marketing strategy. They tend to draw price-sensitive shoppers who reach out to multiple companies, so the leads carry lower conversion rates, hurting overall margins. On the positive side, they usually don't require long-term contracts, so they can be an effective way to test the opportunities and interest in new market areas.

## BRANDING IMPROVES SALES PERFORMANCE

Some home service contractors steer away from tactics that focus on branding because they don't appear to generate many leads. **While that may be true, a strong brand will make all your other marketing strategies more efficient and boost your sales success by increasing your close rates and long-term customer loyalty.** That's because your branding reminds potential customers that you're available to help and dramatically enhances their opinion of you. When they do a search for an urgent need and your company's name pops up, they're more likely to click on it because they recognize it. Branding can also help you attract top talent, because prospective employees know that companies with a strong brand typically have more consistent business.



## DON'T INVEST IN MARKETING WITHOUT GREAT TRACKING

Adjusting your marketing by listening to your gut instincts is a good way to waste money. **Your entire marketing program should include clean attribution, so you don't have to guess at what's working and how well.** That boosts your ROI and allows you to shift budgets from channels that aren't working into those that are proven revenue producers for you. Effective tracking does take some extra work and consistent discipline with your FMS or Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, but contractors with good tracking better understand what works so they can make data-driven decisions with complete confidence.

You should evaluate every tactic and marketing channel based on its role in the funnel using KPIs that reflect real business outcomes, such as:

- Call volume
- Cost per lead (CPL)
- Cost per booked appointment (CPBA)
- Booking rate
- Close rate
- Revenue per appointment (RPA)
- Customer lifetime value
- SEO visibility



## LEVERAGING SEASONAL STRATEGIES

By recognizing that seasonality is key to everything you do, and adjusting your marketing and advertising strategies to reflect that, you'll start creating business and generating revenue when you need it most — not just when your customers need you most.

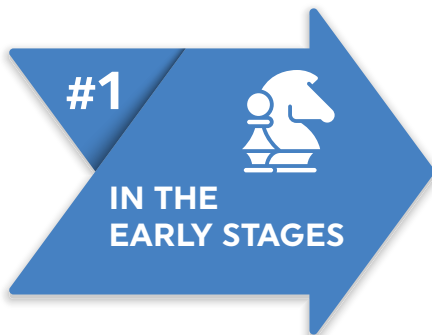
During your peak seasons, your energy and resources should focus on responding to customer calls for repairs and replacements. That's why you shouldn't schedule things like visits for your preventive maintenance program during peak times. If you can't respond to a caller with an immediate need because your team is too busy performing maintenance checks, you'll lose that higher-profit business.

**The best time to tap into the valuable information in your customer database is outside of peak season, when you and your team have plenty of downtime and not enough revenue.**

That's when to use tactics like cross-selling existing customers through automated emails, SMS messaging, and even outbound calls. For example, you can use the database to identify and then reach out to customers who haven't enrolled in your maintenance club with an offer to perform a low-cost pre-season tune-up.

## YOUR MARKETING MIX SHOULD REFLECT THE STATE OF YOUR BUSINESS

A relatively new home service contractor and a company that's well-established may target the same homeowners, but it's important for each to do it in ways that reflect the reality of their businesses. **As your sales reach new milestones, continued growth demands changing the mix of channels and tactics.**



With sales below \$3 million (in most markets), your focus should be on building a solid digital footprint and foundation for growth. Typically, that involves focusing on high-intent, essential channels and tactics like:

- **LSA**
- **PPC**
- **Basic SEO + GBP**
- **Reviews**
- **Email/SMS**
- **Entry-level offers**
- **Community sponsorships**



As your sales accelerate toward \$7 million, it's time to start gradually layering in channels and tactics that support your existing efforts, possibly including:

- **Full SEO strategy**
- **OTT/CTV**
- **Retargeting**
- **Paid social and digital ads**
- **Outbound rehash**
- **Direct mail**
- **Seasonal promotions**



Once revenue surpasses the \$15 million mark, your emphasis should shift to scaling what you've built and dominating your local market. Gaining market leadership is supported by using channels like these:

- **High-volume direct mail**
- **Multi-location strategy**
- **Brand campaigns**
- **Full-funnel PPC expansion**
- **Broadcast radio and TV**
- **Outdoor billboards**
- **Larger sponsorships**

# WHAT CAN OUR MARKETING TEAM DO FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

The Cornerstone outsourced marketing team handles all the traditional and digital marketing and promotional strategy, tactics, and execution you need — from SEO to direct mail to truck design — all delivered through one marketing 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.

## MARKETING SERVICES

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

## 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 & SMS Marketing
- ▶ Social Media Content & Advertising
- ▶ Online Reputation Management
- ▶ Online Directories
- ▶ Online Publications

## TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING

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



## WHICH STRATEGIES ARE RIGHT FOR YOU?

Effective marketing for home service businesses isn't about finding and using a single channel that works the best. It demands you understand how each tactic works, what role it plays in the customer journey, and when it makes sense to layer it into your growth strategy.

**Companies that scale with success are those who match their marketing investments to real demand patterns, track performance with discipline, and build a balanced mix of demand capture, long-term visibility, brand-building, and operational alignment.**

They use a blueprint that provides the clarity they need to create an overall strategy that's predictable, profitable, and built to grow with their business.

That's why business owners who have a Cornerstone outsourced marketing team achieve growth that outpaces their competitors and helps them build that all-important market dominance. Our team works alongside them to create, implement, and track a cohesive, data-driven plan built around their company's goals, budget, and capacity. Whether you're strengthening your foundation, preparing to expand into new markets, or looking for a clearer path forward this year, our team is here to help you build a marketing engine that performs today — and scales for the future.

**SCAN TO SCHEDULE  
A DISCOVERY CALL  
WITH US**





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tracy Paul is principal owner and founder of Cornerstone Advertising Inc., where he has helped home service contractors of all sizes grow and become market-dominant companies in cities across the country for more than 30 years. Tracy is also a Service Nation Premier Coach. Cornerstone is a full-service marketing firm that includes both traditional and digital advertising for the home service industry, and gives you access to a complete marketing department for less than it costs to hire a full-time marketing director, using proven strategies delivered through a marketing manager who treats your business like it was your own.

Learn more at: [www.cornerstonead.com](http://www.cornerstonead.com)



SCAN TO SCHEDULE  
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