

Planning Is The Path To Profit

By Adams Hudson

Hello Members,

Can you believe it's already a new year? It seems like there's always a new opportunity or challenge that keeps us working to be the best here at ACCA-Austin.

I know you feel the same way about your business. You can never learn too much, do too much, or be too successful.

That's part of why your ACCA membership is so valuable. The latest news and industry updates are delivered right to your doorstep, helping you stay a step ahead.

Even though seasons change and years pass, our commitment to serving you stays the same. Let us know if there's a way the Austin Chapter can be better in 2012.

Cynthia Sanders
Executive Director
Cynthia@accaAustin.org

A simple marketing "attack" plan gives you a strategy that considers the needs of your market and provides a year-round plan to meet those needs. It gives you a calm, rational approach to anticipate the slow times and gives you ways to keep promoting yourself when business is booming.

To get your "strategic thinking" in gear, look to these ways to get on the right course:

1. **Quit thinking your "old" marketing will suddenly have "new" results.** Amazingly, contractors crumble up thousands of dollars in "dead" ads a year. If it's not helping your image or your lead count, chunk it.
2. **Quit depending on the Yellow Pages as your salvation.** Over 70% of contractors spend half their entire marketing budgets here. If it's not pulling an equivalent lead count, that's a big mistake. Trim your YP down to 21% of your marketing budget. If you can get away with less, do it.
3. **Zig while your competition zags.** You cannot stand out by sameness. That's so obvious, but contractors still use the competition as a model. And that's a bad idea. Your ads and marketing message should be the most unique thing you have. Parade your unique benefits over the "same old thing" offered by your boring competition.
4. **Set a marketing budget.** This is so simple, yet not one in eight contractors do this right. If you're aggressively pursuing market share, it'll cost you 8-10% of your sales budget; moderate marketers spend 5-8%; conservative marketers spend 3.5-5%. If you're trying to be "aggressive" but spending 2% of your sales on marketing, you're looking for diamonds at the price of cubic zirconium. Spend what it takes.
5. **Set a marketing plan in motion, no matter how small.** At the most basic level, divide your year into quarters and define which ones are your peak seasons and which are "off-peak." Figure exactly what you'll spend to promote what during that time. Then decide "how" you'll deliver that message (media). You're ahead of most of your competition just by doing this.

Your marketing plan should give a great deal of weight to marketing timing. The good news is that, after you build it, it can run itself. I don't mean, "Build it and forget about it." I mean you can build it, chart its results, monitor it, and then only modify what needs work. After the first real planning efforts, your workload is tremendously reduced.

Adams Hudson is ACCA's National Marketing Partner. You can request his free marketing magazine and free marketing reports by emailing FreeACCAstuff@hudsonink.com.

“Unlearn” the Teachings of Youth and Inexperience

Through your school days and beyond, I’m sure you heard sayings along these lines: “If you’re good at what you do, you will be rewarded.” That’s a comforting thought, right? It keeps you trying to be the best at what you do. So when you are sure your level of competence is far higher than the average Joe’s, you’ve got it made.

Well, that may be the prevailing theory, but let me alert you to one small detail. That theory isn’t based on fact or actual experience. Nope. The voice of experience tells you the sad truth: you can be good at what you do – and not be rewarded.

What makes the difference? Sales and cash flow. Sorry to seem so “obvious,” but if the application of that answer were truly that obvious, *everybody* would be successful.

Many people perceive selling as a simple task: persuading someone to buy something. Your objectives should be much broader than that. A good salesperson builds a relationship that benefits both parties in the long-term. Selling involves:

- Helping a customer identify needs, fears, problems, voids, discomfort, loss, desire. (Commit these to memory. They haven’t changed in thousands of years.)
- Presenting information that *solves* these problems.
- Providing follow-up to maintain satisfaction, encourage future “solutions” and referrals. (Thus begins the cycle anew.)

Simply put, selling is the single business activity involving a person-to-person communication process during which the salesperson uncovers and satisfies the needs of the buyer to the mutual, long-term benefit of both the consumer and the contractor.

Your sales are the truest reflection of your company’s health. It is the surest measure of your ability to get *your message* heard, understood, and acted upon in your market.

It’s tempting to think that being good at what you do will bring you success. But the wisdom of experience reminds us all of this important distinction. To be *competent*, you must be good at what you do. To be successful, you must know how to sell your goodness.

Looking for the most up-to-date info in the industry? ACCA has formed a new subsidiary company to oversee the association’s growing media programs.

The company, ie3media, Inc., is a wholly-owned subsidiary of ACCA, focused on creating new value for ACCA’s members and customers through expanded online, mobile and print services.

For more information, visit www.ie3online.com.

Yeah. ACCA has that for you.

SmartWords

“Action is the foundational key to all success.”

Pablo Picasso

QA Orientation

The skills and business practices needed to operate a successful quality oriented business would take several weeks to teach. These orientation sessions provide an introduction and overview of the QA program.

Learn more when you visit www.acca.org/store.

Residential Financing

ACCA is pleased to announce access to exclusive residential financing options through a new partnership with GE Money (www.acca.org/members/financing). ACCA contractor members now have access to:

- A wide variety of consumer financing promotions, ranging from deferred interest promotions to reduced interest rate / reduced payment promotions, meeting many different consumer needs at competitive prices
- Fast funding within 24 to 48 hours upon completion of the work
- Access to 24/7 training on how to sell financing and integrate it into the sales process

The “Must Do” List For Placing “Help Wanted” Ads

When you place an ad for salespeople, you’re sometimes limited by budgets and word count. Here are the things you must express as soon as possible to get the best applicants:

- Your company name should be in the ad. If not, your interviewer needs to “sell” the company as one looking for the highest quality salesperson right up front.
- Product knowledge can be overstressed sometimes, but it helps to tell your applicants that they’ll be expected to be able to understand the product’s benefits *from the customer’s perspective*. Too often, technically minded applicants dazzle interviewers, when it’s the customer who needs to be impressed.
- If you want experience, state it in the ad. If you want to discourage rookies, do so quickly. Be very careful about legal limitations on applicant qualifications. Contact the EEOC if you’re at all unsure.
- Make sure you talk compensation early or put it in the ad. If your plan has benefits over your competition, say so!
- Put contact information in the ad. P.O. Boxes are occasionally a turn off, but regardless, be very clear about who is to be contacted and during which hours.

Finding good help can be a daunting task. Make it easier and more productive by placing ads that will get your company the best results.

“Once you’re tired of an ad, you should pull it.”

FALSE: You’re far more likely to get tired of an ad before your customers and prospects. As long as it’s pulling in leads and sales, leave it alone. Repeating your successes can only increase your profit. Trying to fix what’s *not* broken can only damage your bottom line in the long run.

The Latest from ACCA National

**44th Annual ACCA
Conference
& Indoor Air Expo**

**Las Vegas, NV
March 5-8, 2012**

For the first time in over a decade, ACCA is heading to Las Vegas and is going all-in for contractors with new line up of learning labs.

Unlike any other ACCA conference, there will be more options for learning how to take your business to the next levels of profitability and success.

The all-new structure of Learning Labs – with some 45 minutes learning labs and some 90 minute learning labs – will feature contractors sharing how they broke through barriers to get to the top in their market.

You will leave this event with tips, tricks, and techniques that will boost your business and show you how to stop thinking small and “Raise the Stakes” in your life and your business!

First Annual Christmas Party!



The ACCA-Austin Board of Directors hosted its first annual Christmas party captained by Capital Cruises. The 3 hour cruise, carrying 88 guests, included a buffet, a floating casino, and great prizes.

After the introduction of new member positions on the 2012 Board of Directors, prize winning names were announced, they included:

- Craig Martin - Linc Service won flat screen TV
- Sam Burwell - Quality Living Services won GPS system
- Rose Mary Slatter - McCullough Heating and A/C won I-Home
- Bree Palmer - McCullough Heating and A/C won Weather Station
- Jenson Sexton - McCullough Heating and A/C won Hudson's on the Bend gift certificate

ACCA Austin wishes to thank the generous support of our Co-Sponsors

- AC Today
- ACCA Texas
- Aces Supply
- Federated Insurance
- First Cardinal of Texas
- Cesar X Chavez Wine Group
- Goodman Manufacturing
- Johnstone Supply
- Morrison Supply
- Robert Madden Industries



Air Conditioning Contractors of America
Austin

The New Year has just begun and I find myself looking forward to what 2012 will bring to our local Chapter. We have new faces among us; contractors, associates, board members, and presenters. We have new goals to meet as a non-profit organization: financial stewardship, membership growth and technical training to mention a few. **2012 will usher in mandatory Manual J Load Calculation requirements for both change outs and new building installations for all in the HVAC/R industry. ACCA Austin is working closely with TDLR, Austin Energy, Texas Gas Service and other municipalities to communicate pertinent information as it is received, to you, the member.** ACCA Austin plans to be a part of all of this and more, will you continue to be a part of ACCA Austin?

As the economy continues to challenge all of us, rest assured we are working hard to make the very most of your membership dollars! At a recent meeting, **the ACCA Austin Board of Directors voted to maintain our local dues at the same low rate we have had for the past 5 years, with one change: that the meals at general membership meetings should be paid for by the attendees rather than by this organization.** As of January 1, 2012, all meetings that involve a cost should be paid for by the individual attending the meeting. This one small change will provide a huge monetary benefit to the organization to which your support is greatly appreciated.

The ACCA-Austin Board of Directors looks forward to working with each of you in the coming year, and as always, should you have any comments, questions, or concerns; please do not hesitate to contact any one of us.

2012 ACCA Austin Board of Directors

Al D'Andera, *President, McCullough Heating & AC*
 KC Walters, *Vice President, Quality Living Services*
 Larry Sellers, *Secretary/Treasurer, Faught Service Co.*
 Michael Luker, *One Year Director, Covenant AC & Heat*
 Kathy Mundahl, *Two Year Director, Air Pro, Inc.*
 Tom Turner, *Three Year Director, Austin Energy*
 Bill Potts, *Ex-officio, BP Heating and Air*
 Cynthia Sanders, *Executive Director, ACCA-Austin*