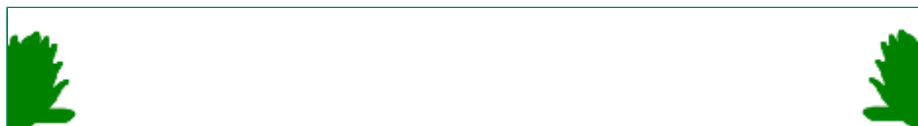




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Marketing Solutions: 9 Ways to Boost Your Holiday Business

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By now, your holiday decorations are tucked away for a long winter's nap.

As you reflect on this past season, did you sell as much as you'd planned? If not, then take a closer look at your holiday marketing. Are you waiting until the last minute to reach out to your customers and prospects?

Holiday marketing must be year-round to be most effective. Luckily, there are plenty of creative and inexpensive ways to make holiday marketing automatic. Here are nine easy ideas for your business.

1. START WHEN YOUR WORK IS UP. Believe it or not, the best time to sell and up-sell holiday décor is when your designs are on display. Consider the atrium of a large office to be your grand stage on which you get to reveal your creative genius to all the offices within a building, as well as neighboring facilities.

Consequently, make sure you "sign" your work. Build in to every holiday agreement the right to display a cute, compatible sign: "Décor by XYZ Co." Remember, your work is your best advertisement, so make the most of it.

2. SHOW OFF YOUR DESIGNS. If a site is appropriate for public traffic, then arrange a reasonable flow of holiday tours for key facility managers within a 10- to 15-mile radius of each major project you have installed. Send them personal invitations for peppermint mochas and a "Tour Décor" of your most dramatic sites. Use photos of your best displays on your invitations.

3. USE ONLY THE BEST PHOTOS FOR PROMOTIONS. Yes, a picture *is* worth a thousand words, but only if it is well-lit, in focus and says, "Wow!" Invest in a professional one-day photo shoot to capture your most recent top 10 projects.

4. EMPLOY FEAR AS A MOTIVATOR. When clients and prospects get the word in February that your holiday displays and scheduled time are in limited supply for the coming season, just watch the commitments flow in. Nobody likes to be left out.

5. PUT YOUR HOLIDAY HITS ON CD. Your high-end prospects and those just too busy to steal away for peppermint mochas need to be shown your designs in grand style at *their* convenience. The solution: Grab a friend who is handy with



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"imovie" or an alternative musical slide show program, dust off your holiday music and put together your own holiday special featuring your greatest hits. Burn plenty of leave-behind copies for sales calls.

6. CREATE A MAILER. Once you've got your holiday hits CD, design a simple mailer using your own photos and your handy design friend. This mailer should serve as a good introduction to your CD and your best work.

Send it to existing clients who have not yet purchased holiday décor and those who manage properties nearby your largest holiday projects. Follow up shortly with a call, arranging to visit for 15 minutes with your cool holiday special and – yes, some steamy peppermint mocha.

7. PROMOTE USING YOUR PEOPLE. Marketing is not only for your external customers, but also your internal customers, or employees. If your internal "elves" are truly excited about your flair for holiday, then they will be bragging wherever they go. In fact, many interiorscape companies have landed big, new holiday installs because their technicians spoke vividly about the beautiful work they do.

8. SEND CREATIVE REMINDERS. June arrives and you have not heard from a few of your primary prospects. Pull out the big guns: Shoot over Santa sunglasses with a note of warning: "It's later than you may realize. Much later! Time to order has almost passed." You'll motivate your prospect to make a decision – and fast.

9. ENTICE WITH A SHOWROOM. If you have the space, then try what the owner of one of Brazil's largest holiday decorating companies does. Cipolatti customers visit the company's showroom, decide on a theme and set a date for installation – done.

Sure, all of these holiday marketing activities may not always go exactly as planned, but practice makes profit. You may have to keep throwing a lot of holly at the wall before something sticks. Just go with your strengths, keep it simple and have fun, and you'll be a success. – *M.J. Gilhooley*

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