

# Marketing & Promotion: Why it goes beyond selling your services

Prepared by Trent J. Keenan, PLS & Kristina Poulter

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## An abstract of The Geoholics Podcast – Geoholics Anonymous

Marketing is something that's easy to put on the backburner. Particularly in smaller operations, day-to-day work can leave little time for big-picture thinking.

But marketing is an important piece of the puzzle to keep geomatics work flowing, particularly in the post-2020 pandemic world.

The good news is that there are many ways to approach marketing, and not all of them are focused on explicitly selling your services.

On a recent episode of the Geoholics Anonymous podcast, five business owners lent their expertise to break down why marketing is important and how they approach it. Here, we share their best advice.



## Build visual brand recognition



From logoed hats for your employees to sponsoring the next local sporting event, one of the first pillars of marketing is getting your company's name out into the community.

This is the cornerstone of Trent Keenan's approach, owner of Diamondback Land Surveying based in Nevada.

Trent recognized early on that surveying is something most people need once or twice in their lifetime. That means they don't need to know the details of his services, but they do need to be able to think of Diamondback when they encounter the rare need for surveying work.

"My entire marketing strategy is branding and logo recognition," Trent says. "So when somebody does a search and they have five survey companies

to choose from, they see one that's been a part of the community. They see the logo, they understand it. They understand what surveying is. It starts with a company name."

Branding is all about a long-term approach to marketing, not one that will result in overnight jobs and new business.

But it's paid dividends over time for Trent, who invests a healthy budget into sponsoring local youth sports teams and getting his logo and company name on jerseys, tv airtime, and radio broadcasts.

"Put yourself in these situations where you have a long-term and a visual logo all the time. That's been our biggest strategy since I started in June of 2008," he says.

This outside-the-box thinking can go even further when you make a connection between the community event you're sponsoring and the surveying profession itself.

For instance, Diamondback will survey the distance of a home run so that they can tie the measuring aspect of surveying into something fun that the general public will understand.

## ***Find a niche market***

Your next task is to ideally zero in on an area that you will specialize in—or at least find a way to differentiate your services from the competition.

Many surveying services are in essence the exact same thing, regardless of the company completing the work. That's why another important marketing step is identifying ways that you stand out, or specific areas where you excel.

Do some quick research into your competitors as starting point. Who are they? What do they specialize in? How do they convey that through any marketing they do?

"Find that niche that sets you apart from someone else selling the exact same service or product. We're all engineers, we're all surveyors. What sets you apart when you're sitting in front of a client?" says Jay Janisse, the survey manager for Jones and Carter in Texas.

Jay's found that one of the ways to excel in a crowded market can be not services themselves, but customer service.

"Something that we really promoted at Jones and Carter is service," he says. "It's that consistent product and the service. It's meeting deadlines. It's having daily or weekly touches with your client. This is where we are on the project. This is where we are on the budget. Taking stresses away from the client so they can focus on their life."

Steve Gangwal, a consultant based in Arizona, says that narrowing in on more focused marketing worked noticeably better for him.

"When I worked for a small suitable survey business for a while, one of the things I struggled with was, did I want to do this shotgun approach or a very laser-focused kind of approach as far as promoting our services? I actually tried both, but what was more successful for me was the laser-focused," he says.

"Instead of just going out there and saying, 'Hey, we do survey. Who needs a project, who needs this, who needs that?' I believe we fell down the path of more of a qualifications-based selection type of consulting services versus hard bid, low price. That didn't work for us," he says.

## ***Focus on internal marketing***

Marketing isn't just about communicating with the public and prospective clients. It's also about maximizing your internal connections, especially if you work at a large company.

Bill Swope is the survey business development manager at Half Associates in Texas. With close to 1,000 employees, most people already recognize the name of the company, so branding to the public is less critical.

As Bill's been working to get the company's new geospatial practice up and running, he's seen the value in internal marketing.

"I probably spend half my time talking with other groups just in my own company. I'm also looking for new prospects outside of the company," he says.



"Being as large as we are, I may not know that somebody else at the company has a contact with them, or has a relationship. And so there's a little bit more of trying to figure out where we are historically with firms that we're trying to work with."

Educating yourself on your own company inside and out can also help you to more effectively cross-sell.

"Learn about the services that your company offers outside of survey," Jay says. "I go to a lot of meetings with our business development person and I'm there to back him up on the survey side of things. But I know about our water department, I know about our sanitary, sewer, and our LIDAR department, all these things. Because cross-selling is huge when it comes to marketing."

When you're talking to a general contractor or an architect, they may not need survey services at that moment. But there's a big chance they're interested in other services that your company may offer.

You should also be able to speak to recent projects that your company has completed.



“Your field guys may not be some of the most sophisticated guys sometimes, but they're out there working hard. I think it's the small things, the attention to detail. Is your truck clean? Are your tools clean? Are your chains oiled up? Is everything organized?” Jay says.

You should also consider having a conversation with employees about the hours they are off the clock.

“I see branding carrying past what the company is and what people do outside of the company. A lot of our guys probably have shirts or hats or branded. Are they at the lake partying with that hat on?” Jay says.

Jay's company offers lots of training and classes for employees to help them prepare to present projects to city councils and deal with the general public.

“We have a Toastmasters club. We have a consultant that comes in and we do speaking classes and things like that. So that really goes a long way helping the company put that best face forward,” he says.

### ***Build your reputation***

Even if you do no formal marketing at all, you always have one thing that's working for you every day: the reputation that's formed as a result of the work you do.

Word of mouth is the most powerful marketing that you have.

“That's the way we kind of built our businesses, just word of mouth and letting people kind of come to us outside of our traditional marketing,” Trent says, “Word of mouth will say, Hey, these guys are fair, they're reasonable.”

Building a reputation takes time, but is your most powerful asset in the long run.

“I have a lot of contacts literally across the country at this point. And having that good reputation for years, it helps me out. Because people that I've known say good things about me and connect me with other folks,” says Bill. “If you want to talk about branding, there it is right there in a nutshell. It's being responsible, being responsive to your clients, and being somebody that they know they can trust.”

Nothing beats a good product, delivered with good service.

“There's a lot of noise out there. There's a lot of competition. Although you can put together a marketing plan and program, if you produce a superior product, you will get noticed,” says Todd.

This is where marketing truly goes beyond the sale.

“It's not just about making a sale. It's about building that relationship,” says Steve.

“There's obviously guidelines, there's regulations, laws that you need to be within, and transparency is important, and quality. Then just doing everything that you say you're going to do and how you're going to do it and being consistent with that.”

When you act professionally and ethically, karma serves you well. It's a small world. And at the end of the day, good actions tend to reap rewards.

