



HOW TO GROW YOUR TRADE PRO BUSINESS

on a **Smaller Marketing Budget**

A ProSource Wholesale[®] guide to a strategic marketing plan

THE VALUE OF MARKETING

Entrepreneurship allows general contractors, remodelers, builders, interior designers, installers, and other building industry professionals to take charge of their business futures. But to do that, they must find, attract, and serve clients to reach scalable levels of success. That's when having a marketing strategy (not to mention insider marketing tips for designers and contractors) plays an essential role.

Even if your marketing budget is rail-thin and you're spending hours juggling the responsibilities that come with ownership, still take the time to develop a comprehensive strategy to grow your company. All the logos and business cards in the world won't provide differentiation among your competitors — but a construction or interior design marketing plan will, one that seeks to maximize funds by focusing on complementary marketing tactics most likely to get you noticed.

FEELING OVERWHELMED? YOU'RE NOT ALONE.

Small businesses everywhere struggle with the same questions: How do I create a marketing campaign with a realistic budget? What marketing techniques will secure the highest return on investment (ROI)? How do I advertise my company? Where do I start the process?

ProSource Wholesale[®] has designed this guide to help you understand several types of marketing that work well alone (and in tandem) for those in the building field, including interior design providers. Read on to learn more about traditional, digital, social, and referral marketing, as well as the granddaddy of them all: integrated marketing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Traditional: Marketing a Construction Business for Generations	4
1. Sponsor the Neighborhood Little League? (Is It Worth the Check?)	5
2. Ask the Big Question: How Much Does Radio Advertising Cost?	5
3. Make Printed Newspapers a Secret Weapon	6
4. Try a Wealth of Traditional Marketing Methods	6
Digital Marketing: Snagging Attention in the Virtual Realm	7
1. Brand Your Construction Business With a Website Hub	7
2. Educate and Entice With Thoughtfully Gated Website Content	8
3. Tell Your Story and Share Your Knowledge With Blog Posts	9
4. Does SEO Belong in This Discussion? Yep!	9
5. Pay for Contractor, Designer, or Builder Directory Listings	10
6. Give a Louder Shoutout About Your Services	10
7. Try Facebook, LinkedIn, and Other Social Platforms' Paid Amplification Opportunities	11
8. Can Your Advertisements Follow People Around the Web?	11
9. Use Pay-Per-Click to Build Presence and Encourage Leads	12
10. Initiate 'You've Got Mail!' Campaigns	12
11. Become a Guest at Another Site	13
12. Control the Word on the Street	13
13. Become a Star of Social Media Marketing	14
14. Need Social Content Ideas? Try These Tips!	14
15. Improve Your Word-on-the-Street Credibility Factor	15
Integrated Marketing: Bringing It All Together	16
1. Track Your Traffic and Gauge ROI	17
Trade Pro Marketing Guidebook	18



TRADITIONAL

MARKETING A CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS FOR GENERATIONS

Before the internet, hot-ticket marketing items included print advertisements, billboards, radio advertisements, television advertisements, flyers, postcards, newsletters, and sponsorships.



Today, this type of traditional (or offline) marketing still has its use to get prospects' attention.



Why hasn't traditional marketing gone by the wayside now that everyone seems to be online? Think about it this way: You still have face-to-face conversations, tune in to your favorite station's talk show host, and get mail delivered by the postman. And billboards? They're around, just in electronic form in many urban and suburban settings.



In other words, our society hasn't shed its need for traditional marketing. We have changed its importance in our world, but not its viability as a marketing vehicle.



That said, remodelers, contractors, interior designers, installers, and builders should remember traditional marketing isn't for national or even widely regional campaigns; it best serves you in local, targeted communities. For instance, interior design marketing in the form of a billboard on well-traveled roadways should position you as a valued neighbor with expertise. Similarly, your construction company's printed postcard delivered to high-income households needs to showcase your abilities as well as your local availability.





Sponsor the Neighborhood Little League? (Is It Worth the Check?)

When you're deciding how to advertise your construction company, sponsorships don't immediately come to mind — but maybe they should.

You can actually leverage your brand's visibility if you pick sponsorships with a natural link to your services. Join a Habitat for Humanity event and help build part of a family's home. Sign up for a highway cleanup effort and bring your wrapped trucks and tools to show your readiness. Build all the signs at your local Little League field as a special "thank you" to the young athletes in your area, making sure you give credit where it's due.

Your goal with any sponsorship is twofold: First, do what's best for your community; that's a given. Second, naturally connect with people who do and don't know you. You want them to associate your construction or home building company with positivity and goodwill. Yes, this type of exposure takes resources, but it's more than a feel-good donation; it's a way to market your brand.

Ask the Big Question: How Much Does Radio Advertising Cost?



Many will tell you radio advertising is all but gone. To the contrary, Nielsen data suggests that 93 percent of Americans listen to the radio every week.

Any type of traditional media advertising can be useful as long as it's incorporated into the overall strategy of your business. As listeners hear your 30- or 60-second local radio advertising spots, they'll connect your name with interior design, construction, etc. When they need your services (or a friend needs a referral), they'll remember your name.

Done well, Nielsen suggests that radio ad spots targeted in the home industry sector can offer ROI of up to \$9 for every \$1 spent. That's reason in itself to rethink your ideas about radio — it may turn out to be one of the best ways to advertise a construction business or interior design company.



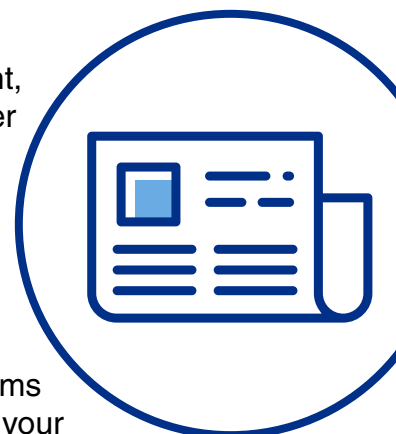
Make Printed Newspapers a Secret Weapon

Like radio, newspapers still exist. Consumers who are accustomed to rifling through pages of local information take notice of all the printed content, including advertisements. Consequently, you may want to include newspaper advertising in your marketing budget.

The key to getting newspaper ads to work: Make them specific, and use them only for initial awareness. They won't have long-term effects, but they will offer a short-term splash.

What does this mean for your construction company advertising ideas in terms of the old printed word? Essentially, you want to highlight just one aspect of your services offered. Focus on your ability to make homes more accessible, or showcase your kitchen and bathroom renovation possibilities. You may even want to select a team member — let's say your lead foreman — and highlight his or her expertise to add a face to your branding.

Avoid focusing on everything you do, though. Sure, you want to tell the world about every company capability, but a newspaper ad isn't the place. You'll end up overwhelming readers with too much information. Be short and sweet.

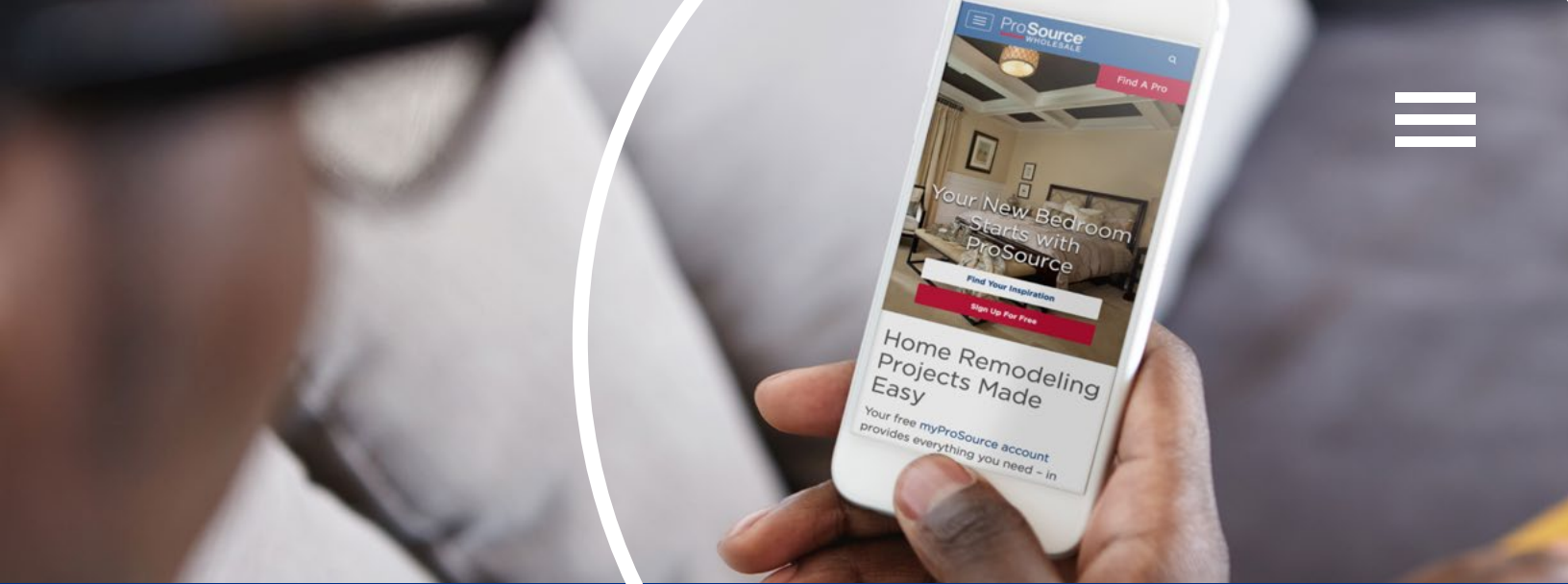


Try a Wealth of Traditional Marketing Methods

Because you're not going to spend an entire marketing budget on traditional methods, be sure to consider all options at your disposal.

In addition to those we've already discussed, consider flying banners at events like home builder shows; wrapping your construction business vehicles; and creating memorable signage (even if you run an interior design firm out of your home). Investing in leave-behind materials like pens and magnets can remind people of your services. Useful products tend to stick around longer than sales brochures, although brochures and flyers are popular pieces, too.

Perhaps the biggest downfall of traditional marketing is that its personal, relaxed nature can be difficult to track. Plus, the cost of all those traditional methods can add up if you're not careful. So while you can still occasionally employ traditional marketing, make sure it's only as a supplement to evolving marketing trends, like our next one on the list: digital marketing.



DIGITAL

SNAGGING ATTENTION IN THE VIRTUAL REALM

Digital marketing may be the most cost-effective form of advertising investment that has ever existed. Is it any wonder Forrester predicts that by 2021, U.S. marketing spend is expected to reach \$120 billion?

If you've hesitated to dive into digital, you needn't worry.

We've streamlined the most used marketing channels preferred by building pros so you can pick and choose which best suit your needs.

Brand Your Construction Business With a Website Hub

Beyond any other digital marketing tool, your website is key. Not only is it available 24/7, but it also provides a central place for all other digital and traditional marketing efforts.

As you're designing your website or working with a professional to help improve an outdated site, make sure the finished product offers responsive design. Responsive websites automatically adjust to any mobile device. This means your construction site will look great whether a prospect is viewing it on a smartphone, laptop, or tablet.

The last thing you want is an unresponsive website that looks dated or makes navigation impossible. Statistics indicate that half your prospective clients will look for your services on a mobile platform, so be sure you're putting your best face forward. The necessity for a mobile-responsive website can't be overstated: If a prospect can't successfully navigate your site from his or her phone or tablet — essentially, if your site isn't compatible for mobile devices — the prospect is more likely to give up and go elsewhere.



Educate and Entice With Thoughtfully Gated Website Content

Obviously, an empty builder's website isn't a website at all. It's merely frames, borders, and backgrounds. Therefore, you must include resources that promote sticky, gated content that always lives on your site. In short, gated content refers to content (like a whitepaper or e-book) hosted on your site that requires a user to submit contact information in order to access it.

As the owner of gated content, consider it an asset you're giving away for free (or almost for free). Instead of completely giving away your insider knowledge to site visitors, capture their information along the way.

You don't have to request a ton of data. In fact, the less you request, the higher your potential conversion rates. A prospect's simple email address can be added to your mailing list and used for targeted emails, email drip campaigns (i.e., similar email messages distributed on a schedule), newsletters, coupons, special announcements, and more.

Gated content doesn't have to be written to be effective, though. A series of YouTube channel video links can easily gain your building or interior design business attention. Don't worry about hiring a professional photographer; just use your smartphone and give viewers a taste of what they can do at home. When they need larger services that aren't DIY, they'll be more apt to ask you for a bid.



Tell Your Story and Share Your Knowledge With Blog Posts

How do you get a constant stream of people coming to your website? One way is through an on-site blog.

HubSpot estimates that businesses with blogs increase lead generation 70 percent more than their competitors. Not only does blogging help you add content and flesh out your webpages, but it also positions you as an expert. A big bonus? Every time you post a blog, you'll give Google and other search engines a reason to crawl and index your site (thus helping it get listed in search results).

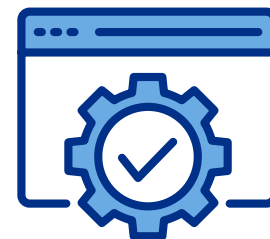
What should you blog about? The sky's the limit! Blog posts can be a mix of pure written content, infographics, images, tutorials, or a mix of all four. Regardless of blog type, try to post at least twice a week.

Not sure how to keep ideas flowing? Brainstorm everything you can think of, from those awesome before and after shots of the cabin you remodeled to an architectural deep dive into the midcentury modern home you designed for happy clients. Then, pop them into a content calendar to follow for the coming weeks or months.

Does SEO Belong in This Discussion? Yep!

And because we're discussing online content, search engine optimization (SEO) deserves its own place in the sun.

SEO is the process of using keywords and key phrases to help your business get as close as possible to the top spot in search engine page ranking. For instance, if you write a blog post and organically place the phrase "common types of home remodeling" throughout, Google may give that webpage a higher rank for that particular keyword term, as well as semantic keywords related to it. Just don't overdo it with keywords; you want to avoid keyword stuffing.



Obviously, one blog post won't suddenly catapult your website to the top of the search engine page ranks. However, if you consistently add natural keywords throughout your content, you should begin to see your business move ever higher.



Pay for Contractor, Designer, or Builder Directory Listings

Another type of online marketing used by building industry entrepreneurs is professional listing directories. Homewise, Houzz, and This Old House lead the directories right now, but others — including those more localized to your region of the country — might be worth investigating.

While some directories add your listing for free, others require a membership. Do a little calculating to see whether the membership fee will benefit you. Are your top competitors already listed? Do you know whether your target audience is already using these directories to find your services? These are questions to answer before making a decision.

Give a Louder Shoutout About Your Services

At this point, you have a website and an active blog. Additionally, your business name is listed somewhere trendy. But you want to make a little noise.

Enter paid amplification, which you probably know as online advertising.

Promoted tweets, pay-per-click (PPC) Google Ads campaigns, influencer marketing — they're all forms of amplified branding and content management. Basically, any time you're using paid online media, you're engaging in amplification.

Interested in knowing more? Start with social media options.





Try Facebook, LinkedIn, and Other Social Platforms' Paid Amplification Opportunities

Every social media platform gives you the chance to pay for more exposure. It's up to you to figure out which ones make the most sense for your business.



Facebook features what it calls “boosted” posts. Essentially, these are pay-per-click content pieces that are given higher priority than others. When people in your targeted audience look at their Facebook new feed, they'll see your boosted posts if you've planned well.



Twitter has a similar feature that allows you to target specific tweets. You pay the social media platform to show your tweets to specific populations.



Not to be left behind, **LinkedIn** has its “sponsored content.” If you're interested in attracting professionals, this may be a good solution for you. Your sponsored content will feature whatever you want. Again, you'll need to discern which personas will be most likely to click on your paid information.

Of course, other sites exist: Pinterest, Snapchat, Instagram. Just remember to do your homework on each before committing to content proliferation.

Can Your Advertisements Follow People Around the Web?

Have you ever visited a site, and then notice that it seems to pop up everywhere for weeks? That's called retargeting, and it's a good way to increase the impressions of your brand to people who have visited a specific webpage.

Retargeting builds awareness and brand consistency. You may not see instant results from retargeted campaigns, but they work in time. Consequently, you have to be patient to see a fulfillment of your retargeting objectives.



Use Pay-Per-Click to Build Presence and Encourage Leads

Google Ads is likely the most well-known of pay-per-click options to consider for your building business.

It's simple to understand how PPC works: Every time someone clicks through your advertisement, you give the search engine or other site a small fee. Google Ads allows you to set your maximum bid for every keyword so you can snag exceptional placements. If you bid on the term "contractor St. Louis" and your maximum bid amount fell into the acceptable range, your ad would come up when people searched for that keyword.

Worried you'll end up paying too much? The goal is for your PPC to cost far less than it nets. After all, if you know spending \$5 per click could easily land \$500 in revenue, you'd be able to comfortably keep your advertisement at that bid.

Ideally, PPC campaigns work right out of the gate, but that doesn't always happen. Often, you'll need to adjust along the way to discern which keywords provide the most bang for your builder buck.

Initiate 'You've Got Mail!' Campaigns

Email remains one of the most practical, efficient ways to reach out and encourage individuals to consider your business. Plenty of services like MailChimp and Constant Contact are low-cost and easy to use. Additionally, they allow you to see analytics in real time to judge whether a particular piece of emailed content is better than another.

Never embarked on email campaigns before? Follow these tips:

- 1. Ask for permission before sending any emails.** This can easily be done through your gated content or by asking for emails from your website.
- 2. Create an email drip campaign** (i.e., a set of marketing emails sent out automatically on a schedule) so you remain consistent. Otherwise, you'll have trouble comparing the success of each email.
- 3. Try some A/B split testing** (i.e., testing a few different options in different spaces to see what sticks) between headlines, subject lines, and content. You'll get closer to finding the best mix for your target audiences.





Become a Guest at Another Site

Many sites are eager to have a supply of content from guest authors, and that's where you come in. With your individual knowledge and expertise, you can give another site's readership or viewership engaging information in the form of a guest blog, article, or video.

How will this help you? The main way is through exposure. If, as a guest, you post on a site that attracts your prospects anyway, you'll be putting yourself in front of people most likely in need of your services. You'll also be giving your company something to link to on your own pages, whether it's your website or on social media.

Of course, becoming a guest writer involves contacting online publications to learn what they need. Some already have webpages that describe how to pitch article ideas. Others don't, so email them to learn how you can help build their curated content.



When you get the green light to create a post or video, use it to your advantage by starting a discussion in it that leads to comments. Editors love to see content get visits and engagement. If your content provides value, they'll ask for more. And your company's name will begin to have more clout with their audience.



Control the Word on the Street

Online reviews are seriously important in today's marketplace. People regularly choose contractors, builders, interior designers, and other home improvement pros based on the feedback posted on trusted websites.

For this reason, you must stay on top of your reputation by asking happy customers to share their stories. Unless you ask, most won't do it. You can even give them an incentive to review you, like a coupon for a future service.

What happens if you get a poor review? First, let yourself calm down. It's the web, and it's going to occur sooner or later. After you've stopped yourself from wanting to say anything salty or unprofessional, create a response directly under the less-than-pleasant review. Be very professional and don't accuse the reviewer of anything. Invite the reviewer to contact you directly to discuss his or her experiences.

Readers will see that you took action without assumptions, and they'll be less apt to believe everything the reviewer said.



Become a Star of Social Media Marketing

Part of your business's marketing campaign should always have a social media component, which means you should have a business page on at least one or two of the biggest platforms. But which platforms are best?

The answer lies in which aligns best with your target audience and helps to tell your story, as well as increase brand awareness, establish credibility, find new leads, and drive direct sales. As Pew Research Center data shows, each social media channel has its own affiliations. Mixing and matching is usually a best bet for discovering the most effective platforms for your needs.

Not sure where to start? Jump on your top three competitors' sites. Which social media pages do they have? Your answer will reveal a smart starting point. For example, Pinterest — a forum for people who like visuals — may be the strongest option for an interior design marketing plan. Instagram may become the choice of a home builder interested in showcasing work-in-progress or real-time transformations. Have a local historical property construction project you want to promote? Tweet on-the-hour updates, and be sure to add relevant hashtags.

Need Social Content Ideas? Try These Tips!

Setting up your social media business page is the easy part. The tough part is figuring out how to populate it with interesting content that attracts followers and promotes organic engagement.

As you venture into the social realm, be sure to apply these best social post practices for trade professionals:

- **Run contests** to encourage people to share your posts. You don't have to give away a lot; a \$25 gift card may entice followers.
- **Choose a captivating, eye-catching profile photo.** Maybe it's your logo, or it's you (if you're a one-person operation).
- **Add client testimonials when available.** You can even take videos with your smartphone to capture customers' enthusiastic responses at the end of a job.
- **Post before and after photos and videos.** People love to see the story from beginning to end!
- **Ask your favorite subcontractors to make short videos "in action."** You can tag their companies and social pages when you post.

No matter what type of social post you do, be sure that it's geared toward promoting comments, shares, and likes.



Improve Your Word-on-the-Street Credibility Factor

We all know that word-of-mouth referrals are golden for any business, but especially for builders, contractors, installers, and interior design experts. You can cultivate a referral marketing program to increase the chances of receiving warmer leads from satisfied customers and noncompeting businesses.

Consider this scenario: You join a local social club and begin talking to HVAC installers, painters, and architects. Over time, you refer people to them when appropriate. No doubt they'll do likewise in return.

You can also encourage word-of-mouth marketing by offering incentives to customers. Provide a discount for a future project if they refer you to a new client. You won't lose anything upfront with this type of enticement because you'll only pay if you get incoming leads that turn into paying customers.



INTEGRATED

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

At this point, you have a wide variety of marketing choices at your disposal. Although you might want to jump into them all, it's not completely necessary. However, you should focus on integrating a number of complementary types of marketing.

How do you ensure your messaging stays valid, clear, and consistent throughout all channels? Be deliberate and strategic.

For instance, you don't want to run a print ad in the newspaper that looks and reads nothing like the content people will find on your website. Similarly, you shouldn't post a photo or video that doesn't seem to fit your overall business branding theme.

Begin by looking at your current marketing and sales collateral. Do the pieces relate to one another, or do they seem like they came from differing companies? If you find yourself with dissimilar marketing tools, pick the one that's been working best for your brand. Then, create new content that reflects that branding.

As you move forward, aim to simplify everything by repurposing content. This involves rewriting or reframing information, yet keeping the core message the same. Need a suggestion? Pretend you published a blog post on "What you should ask your contractor about his or her subcontractors." You could then turn the essence of the post into a smaller piece in your emailed newsletter. Perhaps your blog post gets a lot of attention, so you turn it into a flyer. Later, you may offer to write a guest article on the topic for a consumer publication's website.

Eventually, your prospects will begin to associate certain fonts, appearances, and more with your business. In fact, they should be able to spot your advertisements or website immediately. At that point, you've reached a high level of marketing maturity, as well as channel integration.

Now, it's time to track your marketing plan to see how business is performing.



Track Your Traffic and Gauge ROI

Even if you become tremendously busy (thanks to your multiple marketing campaigns), you'll want to track your responses and returns on investment. One tip: Keep everything simple. Don't try to measure every single analytic. Pick a few that matter, like incoming leads, and leave less important ones for later in your brand's development.

How do you know what data you need? It usually comes down to what you want your marketing to do.

If you want to...

...increase awareness about your business:

- See whether your website is getting an increasing or steady rate of inbound traffic.
- See whether your social content is receiving shares, comments, and likes.

...keep your reputation high with audiences:

- Determine a numbering system that allows you to discern whether comments are positive or negative.
- Use the numbering system to detect whether your content is uplifting, neutral, or dissuading.

...set yourself apart as an expert in your field:

- Count monthly reviews and testimonials from people you trust.
- Add a specific number of industry influencers to your social "followers" list each month.

...drive leads and new sales:

- Determine whether your social content is driving people to your site.
- Keep a list of monthly new clients and how they discovered your services.

Want more help? Tracking codes on printed ads and vanity URLs can streamline the process of learning how prospects are learning about your business. On social media, use bit.ly to create customized and trackable short URLs.

Certainly, you don't want to become encumbered with too much data. At the same time, you'll benefit from understanding more about prospects most likely to solicit your help.

READY TO ROLL OUT YOUR MARKETING CAMPAIGN AND MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR BUDGET, EVEN IF IT'S A SHOESTRING? REMEMBER, YOU'RE NEVER ALONE!

ProSource Wholesale[®] is the source for home remodeling success. We cater exclusively to trade professionals and their homeowner clients. Our private showrooms display flooring, kitchen and bathroom products at low, wholesale prices. Plus, we offer dedicated service that's tailored to your needs. Visit or contact us today.

Trade Pro Marketing Guidebook

Check off all styles of marketing that make sense for your business:

Traditional Marketing

Printed advertisements
Newspapers
Community newsletters or bulletins
Printed sales and direct mail tools
Flyers
Postcards
Sponsorships
TV advertising
Radio advertising
30-second spots
60-second spots
Talk show sponsorships
Leave-behind marketing tools
Pens
Magnets
Other:

Digital Marketing

Website
Responsive design
Consistent messaging
Business name, address, phone number on each webpage
Logo consistently used
Email capture box
Gated content
Blog content
SEO
Directory listings
Paid amplification and online advertising
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)
Google Ads and PPC
Influencer marketing
Retargeting
Email campaigns
Guest posting
Reputation management and reviews
Social media business page posting
Facebook
Twitter
Instagram
Pinterest
LinkedIn
Other:
Referral marketing

Integrated Marketing

Streamlined messaging across all channels
Content updated on reliable schedule
Content repurposing in position
Data analyzed regularly
Tracking measures in place