



WHY HASN'T THE WEB REPLACED CATALOGS?

PRINT IS THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH THE INTERNET BUILDS

Remember the shelves and shelves of manufacturer's catalogs I used when I was at White Cap. As Internet access became more prevalent, the catalogs slowly disappeared. I always thought that the same transition would happen with our contractor customers.

With smart phones and an excellent Internet presence, our eventual plan was to fade out the catalog and monthly circulars. This would save us the costs and efforts of updating and printing 150,000 catalogs annually and mailing 500,000 monthly mailers.

To my surprise, that never happened under my watch, and I see that HD Supply/White Cap is still printing and mailing more catalogs and monthly mailers than ever. These physical print media icons remain active parts of the company's marketing plan because there is still a good return on the investment and high demand for them.

Demand from the sales force to have something to give during a sales call has not changed, and there are still

many customers who demand a catalog for the shelf to use in remote areas with poor Internet access, or simply because it is their comfort zone and they prefer to actively peruse physically rather than virtually.

When discussing print, you still have to wonder why e-mail marketing has not yet replaced direct mail. Ten years ago it was explained to me that Internet marketers were going to use print to drive potential customers to their e-commerce sites. I originally thought this plan would increase costs but the costs could be justified with the savings we would make in lower transaction costs. The customer would then transition to an e-mail marketing program. The bottom line is the Internet has NOT eliminated the need for printed advertising pieces, whether it be a full line catalog or monthly mailer.

Many distributors believe that printed catalogs are cost-prohibitive, but since most construction supply vendors that support co-op programs, a large portion of

MOST CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY VENDORS STILL SUPPORT CO-OP PROGRAMS, A LARGE PORTION OF THE COST OF A PRINTED CATALOG CAN BE ABSORBED WITH CO-OP FUNDS

the cost can be absorbed with co-op funds. These co-op funds often are managed poorly and go unused. I was very surprised to find out that many construction supply companies are unfamiliar with the co-op advertising funds available to them or the process to get the dollars they have earned.

Using co-op funds for advertising to both new and existing customers was the way I used to pay the bills for one of the largest direct mail advertising campaigns in the construction supply industry. The

return on investment was easily tracked with the implementation of a few disciplines taught to the sales force. It is also evident in the continuation of the printed material turned out by some of the largest industrial and construction suppliers in the industry.

Don't let your lack of knowledge of the co-op advertising process cause your funds to go to waste. Understand and be heads above your competition, or at least be competitive, with the support of your suppliers. Print is the original construction supply sales tool and continues to be the foundation from which the Internet expands. Combining the two will help you win new and retain current customers.

For more information on marketing to contractors via print, web or e-mail visit www.48WS.com. **CS**

Dan Tsujioaka is executive vice president and CSO of 48WS, a website design and development company. He is also a regular contributor to Contractor Supply and can be reached at dan@48ws.com.



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