

HOW TO MAKE WORD-OF-MOUTH MARKETING BETTER WORK FOR YOU

A step-by-step checklist to better connect with homeowners and make whole-home energy upgrades a “must have”

EXAMPLES OF TACTICS SERVICE PROVIDERS CAN USE TO PROMOTE PEER DIFFUSION FOR HOME ENERGY UPGRADES, ORGANIZED BY PROJECT PHASE AND PLATFORM

PLATFORM	PROJECT PHASE		
	PRE-RETROFIT	DURING RETROFIT	POST-RETROFIT
ONLINE	Social media-promoted events, project idea and drawing board platforms, and referral platforms	Shareable photo timelines	Online referrals, side-by-side photo comparisons, and showcasing benefits
IN-PERSON	Group energy assessments and community leader engagement	Field trips, education programs, and “DIY” workshops	Celebratory events and home tours

SETTING THE STAGE FOR A FOCUSED WORD-OF-MOUTH MARKETING STRATEGY

✓ When Complete



IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

By geography/neighborhood or demographic



IDENTIFY YOUR KEY MESSAGES

What do customers stand to gain? Affordable, comfortable, healthy, safe, and smart homes.

What are their key motivators for making performance improvements? Financial, personal, and social.

What can homeowners expect from their improvements? Monthly cost savings, increased property value, and a better home experience.



IDENTIFY YOUR BUDGET AND RESOURCES

You don't have to have an in-house communications staff member to harness the power of word-of-mouth marketing. Consider help from family members, friends, or even local colleges/universities with internship programs.



IDENTIFY YOUR MESSENGERS AND CHANNELS: HOW CAN YOU (RE)CONNECT CUSTOMERS?

Messengers: Neighbors, cultural institutions, the local utility, or area businesses can all lend credibility.

Channels can include direct and indirect channels such as online channels, email, direct mail, signage, events, and tours.

PHASE I—PRE-RETROFIT: INSPIRE, SHARE, AND BUILD A COMMUNITY AROUND YOUR PROJECT

✓ When Complete



IN-PERSON

Engage community leaders by making personal introductions and connections to influential community leaders such as schools and religious institutions. Share information regarding how your services can benefit the community and consider doing an energy upgrade project on one or several community centers to generate more leads.



Coordinate group energy assessments by registering with organizations like Energy Impact Illinois to develop group energy assessments or by developing independent group energy assessments, especially in areas where multiple units have similar floor plans (e.g., townhome developments). Engage with homeowners' associations to help promote and market these events as a means to improve the quality of units and reduce costs.



✓ When Complete



ONLINE

Create social media-promoted events using Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other platforms to generate traction for events like group home energy assessments as well as brand and service offerings.



Expand your network with template social media posts that encourage customers to share their energy upgrade news with their peers.



Share project ideas and drawing board platforms by, for example, creating Pinterest and Houzz pages and promoting drawing boards for quality energy upgrades through platforms that homeowners already use to find inspiration for their homes.



Join and promote energy upgrade services using popular online referral platforms such as HomeAdvisor, Contractor.com, and Angie's List under various service types—from energy performance improvements to health and safety improvements. Consider directing potential customers to existing online reviews to demonstrate customer satisfaction with prior projects.

PHASE II—DURING RETROFIT: HELP HOMEOWNERS SHOW OFF THE EVOLUTION OF THEIR PROJECT

✓ When Complete



IN-PERSON

Coordinate energy upgrade site visits with schools, corporate teams, and other local groups in order to increase the visibility of home energy improvements.



Consider running DIY workshops to demonstrate expertise for business development—increasing the number and types of interactions people have with energy upgrades.



ONLINE

Encourage customers to use image-sharing platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to update their peers and create interaction around their project.



Post project updates (with customer permission) on company social media pages or assemble shareable photo galleries, using platforms like Dropbox or Google Drive, that customers can share with select family members and friends.



Promote new and/or use existing hashtags for willing customers to spread the word about their work and help them show off their projects to larger audiences.



Consider virtual education programs by video (such as those offered by Lowes) to demonstrate how certain performance measures are executed in a home.

PHASE III—POST-RETROFIT: HELP HOMEOWNERS CELEBRATE COMPLETED ENERGY UPGRADES

✓ When Complete



IN-PERSON

Organize celebratory events—possibly using marketing budget funds—and home tours to display finished energy upgrade projects and generate new business leads.



Consider offering badges to homeowners for completed projects that are placed in a noticeable location.



Partner with modern and historic home tour organizations to take advantage of home-focused events that already occur in cities nationwide by partnering with groups like local junior league organizations.



Engage with real estate agents, appraisers, inspectors, and lenders to draw greater attention to the link between energy upgrades and their benefits that together can help boost property value, particularly on property listings.



ONLINE

Help customers showcase their energy upgrades on property listings by helping them update relevant energy performance metrics after completing the energy upgrades, showing the impact of the upgrades on total cost of ownership estimates, and adding “before and after” photos.



Ask customers to submit an online review on referral platforms by providing a reminder to the customer with simple instructions about submitting a review.



Encourage customers to post pictures of completed projects (with a contractor reference) on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Houzz using a project-specific hashtag—creating template posts with photos that help customers share these on their social networks and possibly offering them incentives.



Bring greater attention to the multiple benefits of home energy upgrades through creative photography and event planning that helps highlight the benefits that are most apparent during cold and warm weather months.

