



MONTHLY

News and Views from the Connecticut Association of Home Inspectors, Inc.

August 2006

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A Blueprint For Successful Home Inspection Marketing

Submitted by Ken Mita, Sr.

Article courtesy of Society of Professional Real Estate Inspectors – SPREI

Whether you are a one-man home inspection operation or a multi-inspector organization, a smart and effective marketing plan will help you build a better home inspection business. Marketing your home inspection services should be an essential core activity of your business. By implementing a targeted and carefully orchestrated marketing plan you should be able to expand your client base and stay far ahead of your competition.

Many of us struggle with the seasonal ups and downs of this business. And winter is a particularly tough season for most home inspectors - especially those of us in the northern snow states. Since winter is usually a difficult time for getting inspection work, we decided to offer some marketing tips that may be of some help to you to increase your bottom line. So over those cold and snowy winter months, when you may not have too much to do in the way of inspections, give some of the following marketing tips a try.

WEB SITES

One of the most important and equally productive marketing tools that should not be overlooked is the internet. Statistics tell us that more than half of the households in the United States are currently on the web, with over one-third of them already making some serious purchases. And you can bet that your competitors are already there selling their services. So what should you do?

The first and most important step in using communication technology for an internet marketing program is to create a well thought out web site. A clear and properly targeted online web page and brochure can easily increase your market share of inspections and generate a multitude of leads.

What should web site content contain? Inspectors should design their web site content around what homebuyers are looking for and not around the inspector's ego. The home page should be well organized and easy to read because first impressions are very important. It should have an easy-to-follow menu that makes it simple for a user to get to anywhere on your site with no difficulty. Also keep in mind that content should avoid too many "bells and whistles" that can detract from your message.

One way of creating a bond with prospective home buying customers is by using photos. Photos are an effective way of telling your story, making the customers feel comfortable and giving you legitimacy. A picture of you standing next to your company truck, with your company name and logo on it, is one way to create the illusion of familiarity.

Another essential visual would be one of you performing some inspection task. An

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Meeting Dates

August *NO MEETING*

Sep 26 *Hangers, brackets, plates & other connections – Simpson Strong Tie*

Oct 25 *Shingles, flashing and ventilation – CertainTeed*

Nov 15 *Gas and oil burner technologies and controls – Carlin Combustion Technology*

**Holiday Inn
201 Washington Ave
North Haven
(203) 239-6700**

President's Corner

Bernie Caliendo

We have a lot of things happening this coming year. Two new destinations have been planned for our bus trip on October 12th. Also, we have scheduled presentations for our monthly meetings with people we've never heard before who are from national corporations. This fall will be a time of superb continuing education.

Since June 2007 is licensing renewal time with the state, the winter will bring back the need for the CT Law Seminar with Attorney Kent Mawhinney which we have scheduled for Saturday, January 13, 2007. This seminar is required for renewal. Mark your calendars now. Sign-ups for both the bus trip and the law seminar will begin September 1st on our web site and at our monthly meetings.

Due to a last minute cancellation by the speaker for July, our meeting turned into a discussion on a multitude of topics and questions. We had a pretty good turnout seeing that we had to e-mail the cancellation of the speaker the night before. Everyone that attended stayed well past 9 p.m. and some members were still asking questions at 9:30. The parking lot discussion dwindled down around 10 and the last two left at midnight.

Topics discussed and information brought up included:

- Notification by DCP that PSI has again won the state contract to administer the home inspection exam for one more year.
- The state is following up on a complaint about a national security company offering free security inspections for referrals from home inspectors and payment of a \$15 referral fee or 90-day warrantee on the home inspection to any home inspector who gives the security company the referral. This appears to be a violation of the State Code of Ethics for home inspectors and I would advise you to stay clear of this until the DCP makes a ruling one way or another.
- Although the number of formal training schools for home inspectors grew from one, before licensing, to four, after licensing took effect, the numbers are back down to one. DCP also announced that the only school left in the state is moving from West Redding to New Haven. No effective date of the move was given.

Other items discussed: Types of speakers or companies members would like to hear from; kinds of articles wanted in the newsletter (another "ask the attorney" article is coming); more use of the "members only" message board; Holiday party (to have or not); and should CAHI open the library back up. (It was closed due to a lack of use. We can re-open it if there is a demand. We have some very informative books and tapes available for interns as well as seasoned home inspectors.)

When I attended monthly meetings back in the early 90's, CAHI was just getting off the ground. No continuing education was required and only a few speakers would come to talk to 5 or 6 members. Most meetings were open forums with the same 5 or 6 members attending. I am usually not a fan of having to travel down to North Haven to an open forum. Normally I would rather hear from some professional speaker and receive CE credits on some topic of interest. That being said, the July meeting was well attended, where there was lively and informative discussions. It was well worth the trip! This meeting will aide us in planning ahead, as well as serving the wants and needs of our members. We always encourage our members to participate and get involved. Thanks to all who attended.

A reminder to all, due to Thanksgiving falling during the fourth Wednesday of the month this year, our monthly meeting in November will be held on the third Wednesday (11/15).

As our membership is well over 150 members strong, we have in place a CAHI promotional campaign to get our name out in the marketplace this year like never before. CAHI is an organization to have a say at the Capitol and around the state. We want potential buyers, sellers, investors and real estate agents to either have found you on CAHI's web site membership list or ask "Are you a member of CAHI?"

Enjoy the rest of the summer.

Bernie



Mark Your Calendar

August – No Meeting, vacation month

September 27th - Monthly Meeting

Lou Daviau from Simpson Strong-Tie Company presenting all types of joist hangers, tie-downs, and support brackets, their use, design and what to look for.

October 12th

Bus Trip to CertainTeed Asphalt Roofing Shingle for a plant tour and Carlin Combustion Technology for a plant tour.

October 25th - Monthly Meeting

Stephen Hearn from CertainTeed will give a presentation "Up on the Roof" which will cover everything including shingles, flashing and ventilation.

November 15th - Monthly Meeting (3rd Wednesday due to Thanksgiving)

Roger Duquette from Carlin Combustion Technology will present gas and oil burner technologies and controls.

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action photograph of the inspector checking out a heating system would be much better than just seeing the heating system. Photos like that show what the inspector does, and not just the equipment that he/she inspects. And again it creates familiarity, and a sense of professionalism on the part of the inspector.

Be sure to showcase what you have done, and have been credited with over the years as a professional home inspector. Testimonials from satisfied homebuyers should be profusely used in your documentation. List all the awards and commendations that you have received over the years. Include the many professional organizations that you belong to. Show what educational achievements you may have attained. In other words, don't be afraid to brag about your credentials and accomplishments. By building your image, you educate consumers and promote more confidence and trust in yourself and in your inspection company.

Let's look at the pros and cons to each approach. For the average home inspector, setting up his or her own web site often is too great of a task involving skill levels that most of us do not have. In addition, the added investment in software and hardware often negates the positives of having such a site. Finally, running such a web site will eat up a lot of the home inspector's free time – which often isn't much.

Hiring a professional web designer would be a better

choice for many home inspectors. The cost of the web site production and hosting is relatively inexpensive. However, the downside to such services is that your web site often is placed on a general search engine. This is tantamount to planting a tree in a forest. It could be very hard for potential clients to distinguish the tree from the forest- so to speak. When your web page is on a general search engine, there is no guarantee that potential homebuyers will be able to successfully navigate through cyberspace to find your site. And that's something that you want to avoid.

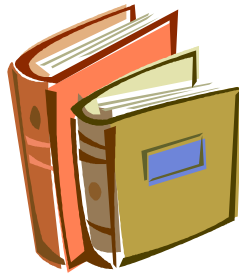
The third choice is one that we feel, in the long run and overall, would be the best selection for someone who really wants to improve his/her chances of succeeding in the home inspection profession. Choose a professional web design company that has a long and excellent track record on the internet. Make sure that particular company is well versed in all aspects of the home inspection business. Check to see if they offer customer retention materials, such as professionally produced newsletters, that you would be able to send to both new and previous customers. Ask about placement of your site in various search engines. Professional attention by an experienced web site company can optimize web site rankings within most search engines. Priority placement within the major search engines is of critical importance if the site is to be found by people looking to hire a home inspector.

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Remember to research and investigate the major web design firms, with particular emphasis on those that deal exclusively with the home inspection industry. Focus on the quality of customer services that are available, and on how much that company really knows about the home inspection business. Look at what these firms have to offer in the way of customized online marketing materials and strategies that will promote a home inspection business.

Articles published in the CAHI Monthly are the sole opinion of the author. CAHI does not endorse or state a position for or against the content of said articles.



Connecticut Law Seminar January 13, 2007

CAHI is sponsoring the Connecticut Law Seminar (3-hour required law course for license renewal) on Saturday, January 13, 2007 from 8:30 am to 11:30 am at Holiday Inn, 201 Washington Avenue, North Haven, CT.

Since licensing renewal will be in June 2007, get this required seminar under your belt before the rush. This will be the only CT law course presented by CAHI before renewal. Sign-up starts in September. Plan now.

Household Wastewater Treatment Equipment What To Do With Backwash Wastewater?

Bradley Korth, Korth Engineering, LLC

Present Situation:

There is considerable confusion on what is the proper method for disposal of residential and other backwash wastewaters in Connecticut? Present situation is:

1. Discharge to a septic system is **not** "usually" allowed as the present formula for determining septic flows does not take into consideration backwash wastewaters. Therefore an "acceptable" septic system would need to be specifically designed to accommodate these flows.
2. Discharge onto the ground is considered a type of activity that requires a wastewater discharge permit.
3. The Connecticut DEP has issued a "**DRAFT**" memorandum / policy on directing these discharges to a separate wastewater treatment system. Of note is that there are no exceptions or grand-fathered systems.

Option #2 for obtaining a discharge permit is rarely an option as sanitarians and state agencies will not issue these types of permits without an extensive application and review process. Undergoing such a process is just not practical in most cases, particularly with residential properties.

Option #3 is a "**DRAFT**" policy and therefore not legally enforceable. However, from the practical standpoint installing a separate set of leaching trenches, it is the only option and many local sanitarians are treating this "Draft" as established policy. In reality, installing a separate system for a residential system is not as significant as it appears; in general a "typical" system consists of:

- Depending upon site specifics, installing between 6-12 feet of leaching trenches.
- Complying with the specified requirements e.g. 2 feet from bottom of trench to ledge or water, 10 feet distant to septic system components, 75 feet for most residential systems to a water supply well, etc.

Hence in most scenarios it is neither impractical nor prohibitively expensive to install such a separate treatment system for backwash wastewaters.

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What Should I Do As A Home Inspector?

Good Question: The least attractive options are likely putting yourself in the position of evaluating that a septic system has either been specifically designed to accommodate for such flows, or that there is a legal discharge permit in place; both of which would be "highly unusual" circumstances!

Suggestion: When backwash wastewaters are identified as either being discharged to a septic system or onto the ground: suggest simply noting that this is a "potential" problem and that this situation needs further investigation to either 1) Provide for a separate backwash treatment system (per DEP policy) 2) Assure that necessary permits are in place if being discharged to the ground, or 3) If discharged to a septic system, assure that the septic system has been specifically designed to accommodate such flows.

The following is a copy of the draft DEP policy for specifics with respect to policy and requirements:



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



May 26, 2000

Re: Point of Entry Water Treatment Devices
Wastewater Discharges
Proposed General Permit

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in regard to the discharge of wastewater from "Point of Entry Water Treatment (POEWT) Devices". Such discharges, including but not limited to backwash from water softener and iron removal systems, require a Water Discharge Permit from the State of Connecticut.

In recognition of the numerous existing and future locations requiring a permit, this Department is in the process of developing a "general permit" with statewide application. Under this program, all sites would be authorized to discharge POEWT wastewaters provided they conform with standard installation and discharge requirements to be specified in the general permit. Discharges to surface water would not be authorized. Discharges to sanitary sewer would be required to meet local ordinances. A separate dedicated leaching system would be required for discharges to groundwater. Other options include the use of filter cartridges which are periodically removed by a vendor, thereby eliminating the need for a discharge. The draft specifications and operating conditions for the general permit are attached.

Once a final draft of the General Permit is available, the DEP will provide public notice and conduct a hearing. Until such time as the final permit is issued, dischargers of POEWT wastewaters to groundwater should use the attached specifications as guidance as they are intended to be protective of the waters of the state. Please consult with your local health department or private consultant should you have any reason to suspect that the discharge of POEWT wastewaters from a particular site may cause or threaten pollution.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Harder
Director
Permitting, Enforcement & Remediation Division
Water Management Bureau

cc: State and Local Health Departments

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- (6) Discharges of POEWTW to the ground waters shall be by means of a separate on-site POEWTW disposal system which meets the following requirements;
- (A) The disposal system shall use a building sewer and a leaching system as defined in Section 19-13-B103 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies;
 - (B) The leaching system shall have a storage volume that is at least three times the volume of the maximum daily discharge of POEWTW;
 - (C) There shall be a minimum of 2 feet between the bottom of any leaching system used to treat and discharge POEWTW and any underlying bedrock surface and at least two feet of separation between the bottom of any such system and the seasonal high water table at the treatment system site;
 - (D) Permittees discharging POEWTW to the ground water shall not create or maintain a condition which will interfere with the operation and effectiveness of a subsurface sewage disposal system, permitted in accordance with Section 19-13-B103 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies;
 - (E) No portion of a system for the treatment and disposal of POEWTW shall be located within 10 feet of any component of a subsurface sewage disposal system which is permitted in accordance with Section 19-13-B103 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies;
 - (F) The following minimum separating distances shall be maintained between any component of a POEWTW treatment and disposal system and a potable water supply well:
 - (i) Well withdrawal rate under 10 gallons per minute – 75 feet;
 - (ii) Well withdrawal rate from 10 gallons per minute to 50 gallons per minute – 150 feet;
 - (iii) Well withdrawal rate over 50 gallons per minute – 200 feet.

5/24/00



CAHI Sponsored Bus Trip

Another continuing education bus trip is scheduled for Thursday, October 12, 2006. We will be touring the CertainTeed Asphalt Shingle Plant in Norwood MA in the morning, stopping for lunch (on your own) and then traveling to Carlin Combustion Technology Plant in Longmeadow, MA in the afternoon. Members in good standing are eligible for this trip at no cost, except lunch. Continuing education credits will be received by all attendees. Bus pick-ups will probably be set up at Long Wharf and in the Hartford area.

Details, as far as pick-up points & directions, times and how to sign up, will be made available at the end of August by e-mail, our web site and the September newsletter.

Congratulations

**Scott Monforte
&
Glen Chatfield**

They are the winners of the raffle drawing for the Channel 3 Kids Camp Celebrity Golf Tournament that will be held in Bloomfield in September.

Winning tickets were drawn at the July meeting.



Guest Speaker or Newsletter Article

CAHI will pay \$25.00 to any member who provides us with a guest speaker for one of our monthly meetings or for any article that is submitted and used in the monthly newsletter.

Your guest speaker's name and contact number should be given to Woody Dawson (203) 272-7400 or Barry Small (860) 655-6383 (barrysmall@yahoo.com).

Articles must be e-mailed to Rich Kobylenski (rkoblenski023@earthlink.net) and should be a PDF or Word document. Articles should pertain to our industry.

We will review articles for content and reserve the right to edit, use and/or refuse them.

Contact CAHI

18 Garden Place
Derby, CT 06418

E-mail: ctinspect@yahoo.com

Web: www.ctinspect.com

CAHI Executive Board

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Artemis

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CT Home Inspection Licensing Board

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The Licensing Board meetings are held at 9:30 am, Department of Consumer Protection, Room 117, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford.

The public is always welcome.

E-mail Bernie Caliendo for the latest meeting schedule at bsurehomeinspect@juno.com