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Marine Retailers Association of the Americas

THE GUIDE TO
MARKETING
SUCCESS
IN 2015

***Inside:** Eight experts share strategies to help
your dealership outperform the market*

Presented by

LIGHTHOUSE M
MEDIA SOLUTIONS

Dear MRAA Retail Member,

Welcome to the *MRAA Guide to Marketing Success in 2015*, available exclusively to you, retail members of the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas. MRAA produced this guide in partnership with Lighthouse Media Solutions, MRAA's endorsed provider of marketing solutions, to help you improve your dealership's marketing and social media efforts in 2015.

This is one of four *Guides to Success* that MRAA is publishing this year for association members, as part of our commitment to providing resources, tools and benefits you can put to work to grow your business.

This invaluable guidebook is a compilation of contributions from experts who offer you benefits through the MRAA Rewards Program and who speak at MRAA events, like the Marine Dealer Conference & Expo. Together, they offer you and your team dozens of tips, ideas, strategies and best practices for using social media and growing your online presence, leveraging e-mail marketing to boost sales, improving your customers' experience online, marketing to women, and much more.

Articles published in the *MRAA Guides to Success in 2015* are designed to complement the incredible value offered to members during the MDCE. When combined with the notes, contacts and new ideas you'll collect at this year's event, you can't help but enter 2015 prepared for new levels of success.

Thank you for supporting MRAA and its partners. We're here to serve you with training, tools, resources, products and services designed to make a difference for your dealership. Got an idea for how we can serve you better? Please stop by the MRAA Rewards Pavilion at MDCE, give us a ring or drop us a note. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,



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Maximize Free Video Marketing Opportunities

By Matt Sellhorst

Your prospects want video. Soon, they'll be demanding it. And you may just lose a face-to-face opportunity to sell to them if you aren't willing or able to provide it.

Does that sound a little overstated?

According to research, 74 percent of all internet consumption by 2017 will be video based. This means that yes, your clients will demand video when researching boats online.

I know what you're thinking: Other dealers in my area won't be doing video, either, so in the end I won't lose out.

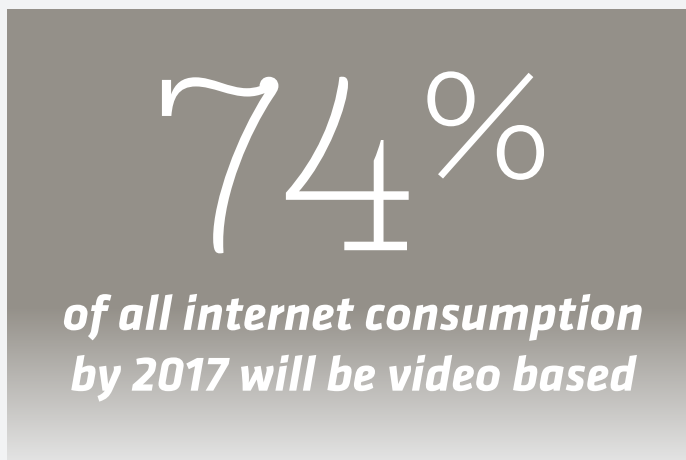
Yeah, that may be true; but the pool guy, vacation companies, home improvement companies, powersports dealers, and everyone else vying for your prospects' dollars will be. And that's why you may never have an opportunity to get face to face with what could be a perfect prospect – because he or she passes up on boating altogether and spends his/her disposable income elsewhere.

Having sold boats nose to nose and toes to toes in today's economy, I can tell you that without video, I would've missed out on countless opportunities. But instead of letting the opportunities pass me by, I jumped on the video bandwagon and became a video marketing ninja. As a matter of fact, in July 2014 I generated 33,359 video views of boats I had available for sale. And guess what? You can, too!

Before I tell you how you can do the same by following a simple, three-step process, let me first share some advantages of using video marketing in your boat business:

- **It's a way of reaching the 80 percent of prospects searching for boats online.** With so many prospects searching online, it's more important than ever that they find you and that you're able to make a connection with them. And there's no better way to build that connection than through the use of video.
- **It helps you build relationship with prospects.** Video is the next-best thing to a face-to-face sales presentation. No other media outlet allows your prospects to see and hear you present a boat. When you follow my formula, you'll build a strong relationship with your prospects, making them easier to sell in person.
- **It's virtually free when done right.** Online video marketing is virtually free. All you need is a smartphone and free YouTube channel. Many people think it requires expensive equipment or software, and that's just not true. I've generated more than 800,000 minutes of watched video since 2009 with nothing more than my smartphone.

- **Video naturally moves you up in search engine rankings.** In addition to creating a relationship with prospects, video also improves your search engine rankings. Because video is so popular with consumers online, Google and other search engines typically move relevant video content higher in search rankings. Using a special technique, I can virtually guarantee first-page placement on Google with your videos.
- **Prospects respond to video.** Getting 800,000 minutes of watched video is nice, but if it doesn't drive quality leads to your boat business, what's the point? Even a non-tech-savvy boat person can drive hundreds of phone calls, e-mails and appointments in just 27 minutes a week.



Now let's discuss a simple, three-step process for creating a video marketing strategy that drives real quality leads to your sales team with almost zero investment:

STEP 1: FILM BOAT WALK-AROUNDS

Grab your smartphone and pick a boat you'd like to sell. Hit the video camera and do a two- to seven-minute feature-benefit presentation of the boat. You can do it all by yourself with just the boat in the background, or team up and have someone run the camera while you're on screen presenting the boat. Be yourself, and be sure to present that boat's features and benefits. Basic Sales 101 stuff will create an

effective walk-around video. Don't worry about being perfect on your first try; you'll get better over time, but you have to start somewhere.

STEP 2: CREATE A VIDEO DONUT

The video donut is a key component to driving traffic with your video marketing strategy. A video donut is an "intro" and "outro" with a hole

points are the reason a buyer would do business with you over your competition. Then, provide call to action, like "Call me to inspect this boat, or any of our boats, in person at 777-777-7777." The outro can be as short as two minutes and as long as you need to tell an interesting and persuasive story about your boat business.

STEP 3: OPTIMIZE FOR MAXIMUM VIEWS

Once a video has been created and upload to YouTube, my preferred platform for video, you need to make sure it's found and watched by your best prospects. Doing this requires a basic knowledge of what these prospects type into Google search results when researching your boats online.

For many, it will be "Boats for Sale in 'blank' [insert name of area]." Using that combination of words in the title of your video will generate hundreds or thousands of views. And when you do this consistently, it will allow you to generate tens of thousands of views in a single month, like I did back in July 2014.

It's really that easy. Anyone can do it: A dealer, broker, salesperson or someone in your marketing department.

All you need is a smartphone and 27 minutes a week.

The question is: Are you committed enough to long-term success to make it happen?

If you think video marketing is a fit for your boat business and you'd like some more detailed information on the subject, I've set up a free, three-part video training program available exclusively for MRAA members. For instant, free access, visit SellMoreBoatsWithVideo.com.

in the middle. The "hole" is filled with your boat walk-around video from above.

In the intro, introduce yourself and your dealership. Short and simple, maybe 10 seconds or less.

The outro is the sales pitch of your video marketing strategy. Create a script that includes three to seven of your unique selling points. These



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Matt Sellhorst is author of the book "Marine Marketing Strategies" and is head profits coach at Boat Dealer Profits. He helps honest and ethical dealers and brokers save time, avoid lost sales and boost margins, generating higher profits for owners and their employees so that they can enjoy the boat business and have a life. For instant access to his free business building report, "The 5 Biggest Sales & Marketing Mistakes Boat Dealers (& Brokers) Make... And How to Avoid Them," visit MarineMarketingStrategies.com or call the 24-hour report hotline at 800-965-2694.

Use Facebook to Increase Sales

By Samantha Scott, APR

By now I should hope that virtually all of you reading this have a Facebook page for your business — and that it's a business page, not a personal account made to look like a business page.

That's good, but is it providing value for your business?

If you're like most business owners, inside the marine industry or out, you may not be sure. Let's discuss how to ensure you get value out of the world's largest social media network and use it to increase sales.

Facebook is by the far the 800-pound gorilla in the living room of social media. With more than one billion users (yes, that's "billion," with a "b"), it's where the majority of social media users are online. It's also one of the easiest channels to use as a business and to garner results from. In addition to being active on Facebook with a solid content schedule, dedicated maintenance and measurement — three core basics for general Facebook success — you can further leverage this channel by devising creative ways to engage your audience. One way is through a contest on your business Facebook page.

I recommend Facebook contests for the marine industry for a few reasons:

- They provide direct communication to the consumer, not mass media
- They are highly measurable; you can clearly determine if it worked or not
- They are visual; you sell an experience and an image

Interested? Good! A little nervous? Don't fret; this doesn't have to be hard. In fact, there are many resources available for people just like you who are new to this and may need some help setting it up (see the "How to do it" section below).

The key to running successful contests on Facebook is making sure they're set up properly and then monitored. In the setup stage, you need to determine your goal: Is it to promote a product, generate leads, engage the audience, or something else? Your goal will help you decide what type of contest to run. There are many to choose from (photo, story or essay, sweepstakes, video, etc.), so make sure that it: (1) supports your goal; and (2) would be something your audience would be interested in. (When in doubt ask yourself, "Would I participate in this?")

Just remember: This isn't the "you show." It's not all about your business; it's about your audience. Try to tap into what they are personally interested in, their connection to boating, the water, the experience you/your product offer, etc. It can still creatively tie into your brand, industry, etc. based on the contest rules (must be a photo on the water, for example, if you're doing a photo contest).

Monitoring is about being present; being aware of what's going on in the contest, how it's performing, answering user questions, etc. It's generally taking care of contest operation.

Other than that, you just have to do some great promotion. Now some of you may be thinking, "Sure, but that's easier said than done." Promoting your Facebook contest doesn't have to be hard or expensive. Here are a few tips:

- Don't leave out the rest of the social mix; leverage your other social media channels to promote the campaign
- Online works better with offline support; don't forget in-store signage, telling your staff and getting them to tell customers, etc.
- Drive effort with a passionate, knowledgeable and trained team member — not your teenager
- Measure along the way, not just at the end; what if you need to make a change mid-campaign?
- Have goals; if you don't know where you're going, how do you know if you've made it there?
- Involve legal counsel, even if just for a review of the contest terms and conditions

HOW TO DO IT

As I mentioned earlier, there are many resources available to help you get started. If you're doing this on your own, you'll likely want to use a service that can help you. If you've done this before or perhaps you're just a bit more tech-savvy, you could be interested in one of the more plug-and-play options. We've used a few and these are the ones I recommend:

- **Beginner**
 - **PromoSimple:** Easy-to-use forms, customizable, measurable
 - **Pagemodo:** User-friendly, no coding necessary
- **Moderate to Expert**
 - **TabSite:** Inexpensive, easy to update, do your own graphics
 - **Woobox:** Inexpensive, variety of apps, other add-ons

With recent changes to Facebook's page guidelines, you also can host a campaign on your timeline (a.k.a your "wall"), but this has some drawbacks. It is simpler, no app creation, no cost, no designs required, but it also offers no data capture (names, e-mail addresses, mobile numbers, etc.), and you run the risk of overwhelming your audience

with multiple posts by you or others about the contest. For this reason, I recommend using an app and just sharing about it in your timeline.

EXAMPLE OF FACEBOOK MARKETING SUCCESS

So it sounds good, we have an idea of where to start, but can you prove this works? Yes, you can! Here's an example of a company in the marine industry that leveraged a Facebook contest as part of its digital marketing efforts.

Pure Naples is a South Florida-based marine attraction company that saw great success with Facebook photo contests earlier this year. One in particular tapped into Valentine's Day and, aptly named "Love Boat," generated more than \$200,000 in value in just five weeks.

Stated goals were: To increase engagement on the company's Facebook page; and increase business leads from social media channels.

Sounds like what you'd like to do, too, right?

A photo contest was selected based on the target audience, and it was structured so that the audience would choose the winner by vote – taking the pressure off Pure Naples and further engaging the audience. By creatively teaming up with a local restaurant and hotel, they created a package offer; participants could win a fishing charter, dinner for two and a one-night local hotel stay. The cost to Pure Naples was minimal, and the contest participant got a great package. Plus, the restaurant and hotel helped promote the campaign, too, since it also benefited them.

Win. Win. Win.

All the participant had to do was share a photo taken on the water (could be of themselves, a loved one, a pet... anything) and complete the entry form. They were then encouraged to share their entry with friends and family to increase their votes and likelihood of winning, thereby increasing awareness for the campaign – and for Pure Naples.

The photo contest exceeded all goals: It increased sales leads from social media by 128 percent; audience size by 107 percent; and viral impressions by 54 percent. More than \$200,000 in new audience value and leads were generated. Plus, Pure Naples expanded its e-mail and

general database via information provided in the entry form and gained new images it could use in other campaign. Total cost to the company was a mere one percent of the value (including graphic design, limited Facebook advertising, and cost of the fishing charter)!

EXPECTED RESULTS

I hope this has given you a look at how Facebook can increase sales for your business. It doesn't have to be hard, and it can definitely provide value to your business. Just remember to have clear goals going in, follow the rules (of Facebook and for contests/sweepstakes, etc. in your particular state) and measure results.

You should expect some, if not all, of the following from your Facebook contest:

- Increased engagement and activity on the page
- Increased audience size (on Facebook and, ideally, in your general and e-mail databases)
- Increased web traffic
- Increased leads and sales

Naturally, if your audience is engaging with you online, participating in your activities, and continually seeing your brand or hearing about it, you're going to gain top-of-mind-awareness.

So where do you think they'll go or who they will call when they are ready to buy? You!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Facebook Page Guidelines](#)
- [Successful Facebook Marketing Examples, Tips & A Secret from Mari Smith](#)
- [6 Daily Habits for Facebook Marketing Success](#)
- [Boating Magazine's "Pet Photo Contest"](#)
- [7 Facebook Contest and Promotion Ideas With Examples](#)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Samantha Scott, APR is president of Pushing the Envelope Inc., an award-winning marketing communications firm based in Fort Myers, Fla., servicing clients locally and nationally since 2006. The firm offers strategic communication services enhancing its clients' customer and employee relations through public relations, branding, social media strategy, internet marketing, media relations, event coordination, and more. The firm has been honored with nearly 30 awards for public relations, advertising and marketing programs. Scott has personally been recognized as an outstanding Florida Gulf Coast University alumni, inducted into the Soaring Eagles Society, and was chosen as a 40 under 40 honoree by Gulfshore Business magazine for her contributions to the Southwest Florida business and community arenas.

Marketing to the Modern Woman

By Kelly McDonald

It's been called the she-conomy: The more than \$5 trillion — yes, trillion — that U.S. women spend on consumer goods and services each year. To provide some context for just how big of an economic engine women are, \$5 trillion is a larger economy than Japan. And of that \$5 trillion, women with children spend \$3 trillion.

Women represent a huge opportunity for you, as a retailer, to grow your business with a customer base that's large, lucrative and loyal. But you can't simply advertise to women; you must *connect* with them. They don't want a transaction; they want a relationship with you.

To cultivate any relationship, you must first demonstrate that you understand and value the person you're trying to reach. You need to "get them." You must relate to their needs and, in the case of retail, you must demonstrate that you can meet and satisfy their needs

It starts with recognizing that your approach to marketing to women can't be the same as it would be marketing to men. Women and men are different in fundamental ways — they differ both in how they process information and how they make decisions.

Women like choices. Women are not usually overwhelmed by having a lot of choices and options. In fact, most women say they are empowered by choice. Being able to look at all their options makes women feel confident about their decision.

Men prefer to have their choices narrowed down for them... That's why most electronics advertising, which usually is targeted to men, features just three price points.



When marketing to women, you'd be better served by showing breadth and all available possibilities.

and expectations. You have to get in front of women to reach them, of course; but more importantly, you have to demonstrate that you *understand* them.

This understanding is key, because 91 percent of women say that "advertisers just don't get them." This is a terrible statistic, but at the same time one that should be encouraging — because it will help you and your brand more easily stand apart from your competition.

So how do you stand apart? How do you reach the women who are your target audience and have their wallets in hand, ready to spend?

Men, on the other hand, prefer to have their choices narrowed down for them. They feel overwhelmed when presented with too many options. And three seems to be the magic number. Having two choices is too few. Having four or more is too many. Three is just right for men. That's why most electronics advertising, which usually is targeted to men, features just three price points.

So, if you were marketing to men, you'd be better off saying "Here are our three best-selling boats," whereas when marketing to women, you'd be better served by showing breadth and all available possibilities. Women are patient. Women will patiently — and happily —

wade through myriad choices and tons of information to find just what they want. And when they do eventually find what they're looking for, they feel great about their purchase decision.

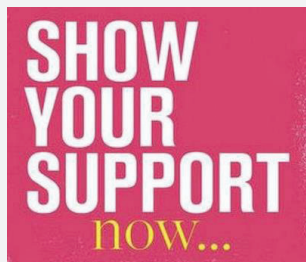
There are other ways to connect with your high-potential female prospects. Here are five key values that are pretty universal to all women:

1. NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS

Women are nurturers. The quality of their relationships is a top priority for most women, and they invest significant time in making sure those relationships flourish. Spending quality time with family, friends and loved ones is important to women. Your ads and marketing efforts can depict women engaged in their relationships, whether it's with their children, their friends or family. Boating is a great way for families to spend quality time together. It's a natural fit.

2. SHARING

Women love to share their lives, experiences, preferences and opinions with other women. Your marketing can showcase women sharing helpful tips and advice, their boating stories, or the family fun and relaxation they've discovered through boating. Real women sharing real stories and insights resonate with the ladies.



3. MAKING IT EASIER AND SIMPLER

Many women lead demanding lives. They hold full-time jobs, run households, take care of their families, and are active in their community. Many are doing it alone, as single parents.

So anything that helps make their busy lives better, easier, simpler or more convenient is wonderful. Your marketing should show how women can benefit from your products or services. Will it make their day more efficient? Will it save them time or money? Does your product represent tremendous value? Do you have extended hours on weeknights? Free pickup and delivery? Show women how your product fits into their life and makes it better or simpler, and you'll be well on your way to winning their business.

4. RAISING HAPPY AND HEALTHY FAMILIES

For many women, this is the single most important thing in their life. It's the goal, the focus, the priority. And it fits in perfectly with boating.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Kelly McDonald is considered one of the nation's top experts in marketing and consumer trends. Her client experience includes brands such as Toyota, Kimberly-Clark, Nike, Harley-Davidson, Miller-Coors, and Sherwin-Williams. Kelly was named #1 on the list of "26 Hot Speakers" by Successful Meetings magazine. Advertising Age has twice named her company one of the top ad agencies in the U.S. She has been featured on CNBC, CNNMoney.com and SiriusXM Radio, as well as in Forbes, Bloomberg Businessweek, and Fast Company magazines. McDonald is the author of two bestselling books: Her first, "How to Market to People Not Like You," was #7 on the list of

Bestselling Business Books of 2011; her latest book, "Crafting the Customer Experience for People Not Like You," was #5 on the bestseller list for 2013.

Who doesn't want their children to be active, healthy and fit? Show a mom how boating helps her keep her family healthy and well, and how being outdoors and active fits into a healthy family lifestyle. You'll not only sell your product, you'll be giving her the peace of mind that she's doing the right thing for her family's well-being.

5. WOMEN SUPPORT WOMEN

Women tend to support other women. The bonds of female friendship are deep and special. As such, women look favorably upon those businesses and brands that support women. You can support a local women's group, partner with women-owned businesses on a special project, donate to a girl's group or scholarship – women pay attention to businesses and brands that "put the welcome mat out" for them, and they will reward you by buying from you. Additionally, there's a trust factor that exists between women: Women trust what other women say. Use this to your advantage. If you have happy, satisfied women customers or a great success story of a woman who purchased a boat or other services or accessories from you, post a testimonial or tell that story online. Women researching your company/dealership will come across that and will trust what another woman says about you. Cultivate testimonials from women and post them on your website and social media pages.

In addition to the above-mentioned five key values for effectively marketing to women, millennial women (ages 18-35, whether childless or moms), hold another value close to their hearts: That of "improving society." Ninety-two percent of millennial women say that they "want to buy a product from a company that supports a cause." Find a cause that fits your company and your corporate culture and tell consumers what you're doing to support that cause. Whether it's conservation and "going green," donating computers to a local school, picking up trash by the sides of the highway, holding a blood drive each quarter, or participating in the fight against breast cancer – the possibilities are endless. Show women that you're connected to a cause, and they are likely to reward you with their business.

Women, as consumers, are a marketer's dream: They're a large, lucrative and loyal customer segment. They share their opinions and experiences freely with one another, and they can boost your sales and profits to new heights, today and tomorrow. Learn to properly market to women and watch your business grow!



Technology + Effort = Effective E-mail Campaigns

By Bob McCann

E-mail marketing is not spam, and if used effectively can be invaluable. Well-executed e-mail marketing campaigns can help marine dealers stay connected with their customers in a cost-effective way.

The marketing team at M&P Mercury in British Columbia is a great example of a dealer sending well-thought-out and appealing e-mails on a consistent schedule. They work hard to include content in e-mails that has relevance for all M&P recipients and is attractive enough to make anyone look twice.



prospects with relevant interests so you can easily segment your list by customer interest.

Bob Pappajohn, president of M&P Mercury, has made a point of doing this for years and now has a database of more than 18,000 boat prospects and owners in his market who've shown interest in the brands his company sells.

To win business, you have stay in touch with your customers in a relevant way. If you don't, customers and prospects will forget you, and you'll lose sales. To take full advantage of e-mail marketing, you need to follow some basic guidelines to avoid the pitfalls of the wired and mobile worlds.

TIP #1: DETERMINE YOUR STRATEGY

Before you decide on content, and before you jump into design, you need to sit down and invest the time to answer some questions and create a strategy:

- **Identify your objective.**
Is your objective lead generation, customer

Hopefully, like the team at M&P, you've been diligent at collecting customer e-mail addresses from every sale. In addition to capturing e-mail addresses from online leads, hopefully you've been dutifully asking for an e-mail address from everyone visiting your dealership or prospects that you meet at boat shows. And don't forget to capture and tag customers and

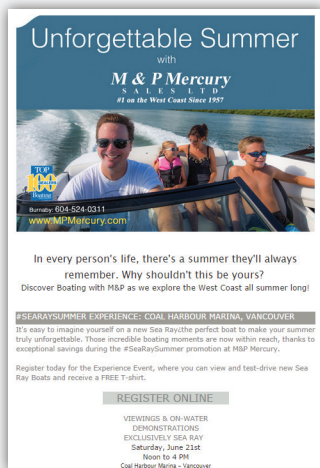
nurturing, brand awareness, product promotion, etc.? If you have more than one objective, prioritize them.

- **Target your audience.** Who and where is your target audience: Customers, prospects, local, national, etc.?
- **Set the date.** Finalize the date for your event or sale, making sure to include enough lead time.
- **Call to action.** What immediate action do you want recipients to take: Call, visit your dealership, see you at a show, etc.?
- **Measure success.** Establish what you want to measure and what results you want to achieve.

TIP #2: GIVE YOUR CUSTOMERS VALUABLE CONTENT

Probably the biggest mistake an e-mail marketer can make is to include nothing of value in the e-mail campaigns that he or she sends to customers. Here are some guidelines that you should follow when creating e-mail campaigns:

- **Be relevant.** Whether it's interesting and current information, tips or tricks, ways of dealing with maintenance, or money-saving deals and promotions, your e-mails must contain something the recipient will want and value. What's important to them? Visualize your end customer: Who are they; what they do; how your product/service is going to make their life easier or better, save them time, or increase their enjoyment. Readers are pressed for time, so make sure your e-mail content is easily "scannable" and that your key points stand out.
- **Provide a clear call to action.** Don't send dead-end e-mails without links for e-mail recipients to take the next step. Write call to action copy that tells subscribers exactly what to do. Use hyperlinks such as "click here to see more details," "sign up here," and "click here for a map and directions." These links are measurable and give you great feedback for the effectiveness of your e-mail and a targeted list of those most interested in the product. Esther Reich, the mastermind behind M&P's e-mail campaigns, takes the extra time to make nearly everything clickable. That way, no matter what a recipient finds interesting, the rest of the information or story is only a click away. Of course, all of the hyperlinks are directed to MPMercury.com, so the customer is only a click away from looking at other M&P boats or services.





- **Deliver value, not self-promotion.** This is HUGE! For instance, a good dealer will send an e-mail featuring a Spring Tune Up for \$150; a better dealer will send a checklist on what to do to tune up toys and include an offer for those who are interested in that service.

TIP #3: DETERMINE THE FREQUENCY AND TIMING

If you e-mail your subscribers too often, you risk having your messages ignored, deleted, marked as SPAM, or, even worse, the recipient might unsubscribe. Ironically, if you don't e-mail your subscribers frequently enough, the same thing may happen. There are no rules about the correct frequency for sending marketing e-mails, but these are some good, general guidelines to keep in mind:

- **Send an e-mail to your subscribers more than just a few times a year.** With such infrequency, people will forget about you, and messages sent after several months of no correspondence will probably result in unsubscribe requests.
- **Don't send more than one e-mail a week.** Even if people like your content, they will quickly grow tired of being barraged by e-mail and end up unsubscribing from your list.
- **Launch campaigns mid-week and mid-day.** The best days and times to send e-mails are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. local time. Esther from M&P Mercury follows this best practice: "Creating effective e-mails takes a lot of thought and effort; I make the most of this investment by ensuring each campaign is delivered at the optimal time."

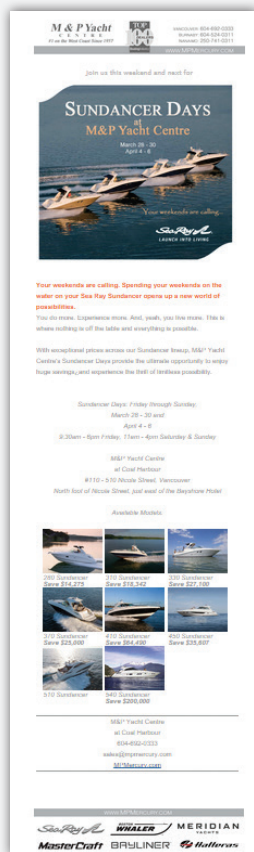
TIP #4: INCLUDE TEXT AND IMAGE

It's best to separate your text and images and use ALT descriptions for each image. That way, even if images are blocked, the text will give the reader a better idea of the e-mail's content, which might entice them



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Bob McCann is ARI's director of education. ARI creates award-winning software solutions that help equipment manufacturers, distributors and dealers Sell More Stuff!™ – online and in-store. ARI removes the complexity of selling and servicing new and used inventory, parts, garments and accessories for customers in marine, powersports, automotive tire and wheel, outdoor power equipment, RV, and white goods industries. More than 22,000 equipment dealers, 195 distributors and 140 manufacturers worldwide leverage the company's website and e-Catalog platforms.



to unblock the images or click on the link to view on a webpage. This is an even bigger issue when it comes to the more than four billion mobile devices in the world. Most iPhones and Droids render images nicely, but there are many phones out there that still block images.

M&P has kept up with best practices and stayed ahead of the pitfalls of image suppression. Following this rule allows Esther to include multiple hyperlinks that lets prospects with different interests click on what they like the most.

TIP #5: MAKE THE MOST OF "FROM" AND "SUBJECT" LINES

You only have a few seconds to entice your recipients to open a message before they delete it without a second thought. So make the most of it! Here's how:

- The "from" line identifies who the e-mail is from, and should clearly contain your exact company, brand or newsletter name with which your e-mail subscribers signed up. We've also found that e-mails that arrive "from" a salesperson they know rather than the company get open and clicked thru at a much higher rate – as much as 400 percent more. Bob Pappajohn of M&P Mercury bought into this idea early; he not only makes sure that every opportunity that comes the dealership's way is entered in the database, but also that every customer and prospect is assigned to a specific salesperson to take advantage of this best practice.
- The "subject" line is an equally important element of your e-mail campaign's success. It should contain a well-thought-out statement or phrase, roughly 35 to 50 characters in length, that gives readers a good reason to open it up. If you're sending e-mails from the assigned salesperson, be sure to include the company's name in the subject line. Subject lines are so subjective, and everyone you ask will have a different opinion on whether it's effective or not. This is a good time for A/B testing. Simply take two versions of the subject line that you think are the most effective and send half of your campaign with Subject Line A, and the other half with Subject Line B; then see which one performs best by examining open and click-thru rates.

These tips should provide you with a good foundation for establishing a successful e-mail marketing program. If you already employ these measures, then you're probably enjoying the benefits that a well-crafted e-mail marketing program can bring to your dealership.

If you haven't yet incorporated these ideas into your e-mail marketing, try them. You'll almost certainly be pleasantly surprised at what a difference they make.



Join the Social Conversation to Drive Sales

By Lauren de Vlaming

The question I hear people ask most often, in almost every state, from dealers large and small, is the following: “How do I make sales using social media?”

It's the most important question you should ask yourself when using any tool, because if it doesn't contribute to your revenue, why would you use it? But when it comes to social media, the “how” eludes most businesses.

The best way to generate sales through social media is by **not selling**.

You've probably heard social media compared to a big party (or community), and that's a fitting analogy. If someone walked up to you for the first time at a dinner party and immediately asked for something, like \$25,000 out of your pocket, you'd tell them to take a hike.

But that's how we treat social media sometimes: “Hello, world, I'm here! Now give me money for my wares! A lot of money! \$30,000!”

It's too quick of a leap for most people.

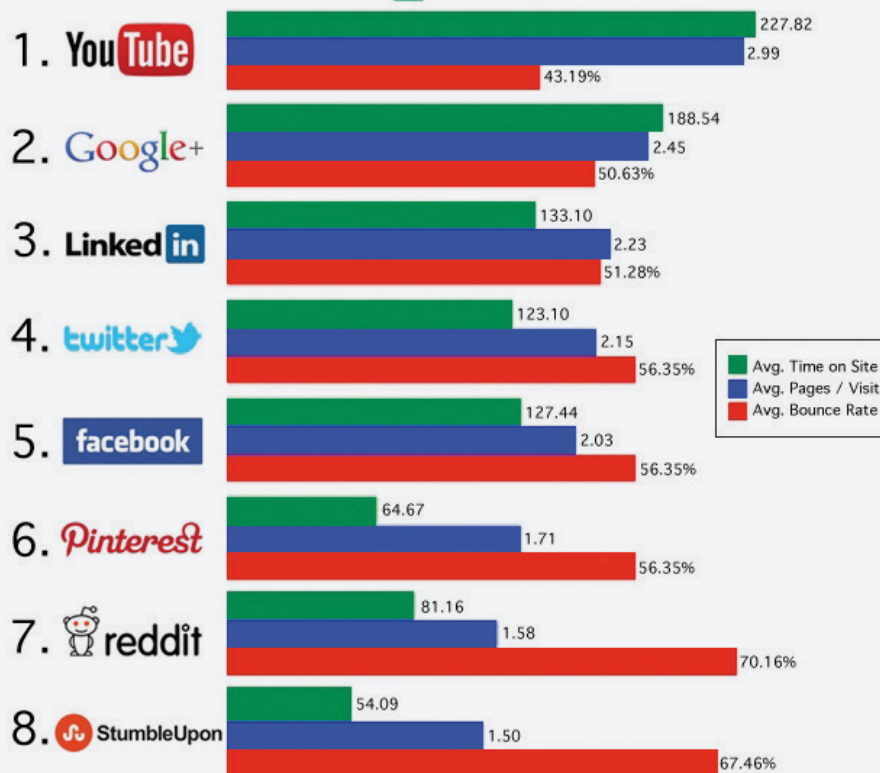
Conversely, let's say you meet someone – Bill – at a dinner party. Bill sells used cars. He doesn't press you to buy anything from him. In fact, his occupation only casually comes up in conversation. You exchange e-mails with Bill and slowly develop a relationship with him over time, occasionally going out for a drink to discuss work, life and the like.

One day, your car breaks down and you're in the market for a new vehicle. Who are you going to call?

Social Media Post-Click Engagement

(September 2013 - February 2014)

Presented by: Shareaholic



Data based on average activity across over 200,000 sites and 250+ million unique visitors each month

Social media works the same way. It takes more than a few days. It's a weeks-, months- or years-long game.

If you need concrete proof, check out some of your favorite brands on social media. Coca-Cola, Harley-Davidson, Michael Kors – most of what they do isn't "selling." It's creating a brand affinity that sticks

The best way to generate sales through social media is by not selling

with them for the long haul. It's creating an environment in which consumers want to hang out. It's evoking an emotional response with which their audiences connect.

Employing these strategies will help you as you build relationships with your followers – and eventually make sales.

Here are some helpful hints for eventually converting your social into sales:

- 1. Follow the 80/20 rule.** Sell your products only 20 percent of the time. The other 80 percent should be devoted to delivering witticisms, status updates, photos, videos, and other content your audience enjoys. For example, if you post on Facebook seven times a week, only one of those posts should be promotional. The other six should be things you'd discuss with co-workers at the water cooler or with friends/family over dinner.
- 2. Be consistent.** Just as you would want to maintain a consistent relationship with someone in real life, post regularly

to stay on your potential customers' radars. (Remember: Not everyone will see every post you put up, so even if you post seven days a week, your followers could see fewer.)

- 3. Converse.** Don't hurl a tweet out there just for the sake of tweeting. Figure out what your audience likes to talk about and start a conversation. Is the weather crazy in your city? Is the government placing an extra tax on boaters? Are local festivals taking place? Whatever's relevant to your demographic – that's what you want to talk about. Asking questions can be a good way to get the ball rolling.
- 4. Respond.** Too many times I look at a dealer's Facebook page to see that the audience is there, posting questions on the wall or comments on the status updates, but the dealership isn't responding. This would be like staring off into space at the dinner party while Bill asks you a question. Answer it! And answer it promptly. Studies show that people expect responses within 24 hours (at the longest) on social media. (Note: The window on Twitter is closer to an hour.)
- 5. Use @tagging.** Not only should you tag your followers when it's relevant, but also tag other brands or companies on social media. Don't stand in the corner by yourself; try instead to interact with everyone at the party.
- 6. Don't be a schmuck.** Have you ever met someone who only talks about how great they are? The equivalent is when you "like" your own status update on Facebook or other social media. Stop liking your own posts and start liking what other people are doing.
- 7. Sell to your friends.** When it's time to promote your products, you'll have a group of "friends" to sell to, instead of a group of unknowns. And forgo the old-school marketing speak: "Act now to take advantage of this super deal! Call today!" Instead, sell to your friends: "We've got the new Chaparral 307 SSX on lot today. We think it's the best bang for your buck, as far as runabouts go." That sort of authenticity is what helps your dealership establish trust – and ultimately gain customers.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Lauren de Vlaming is a results-driven international social media marketing and content strategist for Dominion Marine Media and its family of brands. As social media grows and evolves, de Vlaming focuses on integrating social strategies across departments and provides the tools customers need to manage their own social media. Highly organized, innovative and spunky, Lauren has a proven track record in international social media marketing, online reputation management, and brand management, as well as team leadership. She has spoken at a number of industry events across the country, including the NYBA, YBAA, MRU and YBU conferences, or you may have seen her on ABC's "World News Tonight."

Improve Consumers' Boat-Buying Experience Online

By Courtney Chalmers

What are your favorite websites? I would bet that Amazon, Zappos, Uber and maybe some social sites like Pinterest and Facebook come to mind. I also would bet that the reason you like those sites is because they are incredibly easy to use and deliver results that match your preferences. You trust these brands. Needless to say, expectations have changed; consumer experience is first and foremost now; and we, as consumers, demand it.

While the marine industry does not yet demand the type of experience offered by Amazon, Zappos or other consumer-centric websites, consumers have spoken – and there are opportunities to improve the boat-buying experience and increase trust between buyers and sellers. We recently worked with a research company to find out just how consumers feel about shopping for a boat and what you, as a leading boat dealer, can do to make it better*.

1. "If a dealership is sloppy with its listings, I'm not going to waste time getting more information."

Tip for success: Build trust with more detailed and complete listings.

When asked about the toughest part of boat buying, nearly half of respondents said that it's determining what kind of boat they actually need. Buying a boat is a major decision that requires research, not to mention a financial and emotional commitment. Consumers shared that they "don't want to be uninformed when [they] finally get the courage to call a dealership," and they expect to find complete listings that give them all the information they need to make a decision.

Tell them all about the boat – from the like-new electronics to the slight discoloration in the gelcoat. With 68 percent of boat shoppers researching their purchase through used boat listings, it's no surprise that consumers said they've chosen a dealer based on the quality of listings. "If he's willing to point out a minor flaw in the boat before I even get to the dealership, I feel more confident that he's the guy to do business with; that he's not going to take advantage of me," one respondent wrote.

Show a price. Consumers are comparing boats by price. When asked about the most important factor in shopping for a boat, consumers said price (second only to type of boat). Sixty percent of consumers are comparing boats before contacting a dealership, and price is an important factor in that comparison. Though there are existing restrictions on displaying price for some new boats, used boat listings should always include a price – even you display the MSRP.

Dealers shared that "many internet leads are browsers just looking for more information." By having more complete listings, you'll generate higher quality leads that are more ready to buy.

2. "A lot of the boats we traveled to see were junk, even though they looked perfect in photos."

Tip for success: Toss the wide-angle lens and show accurate, quality visuals.

During our research, consumers were asked how the boat shopping experience could be improved, and the majority of respondents said that more accurate photos and videos are key.

Take up-to-date photos. The boat may have been a real showstopper in its glory days, but consumers want to see the boat for sale *today*. Take the time to snap updated photos – even if you have older photos ready to go. Prospects feel "tricked" when they take the time to come see the boat and it's not in the same condition (or size!) as pictured – and your time, as well as theirs, is wasted.

By having more complete listings, you'll generate higher quality leads that are more ready to buy

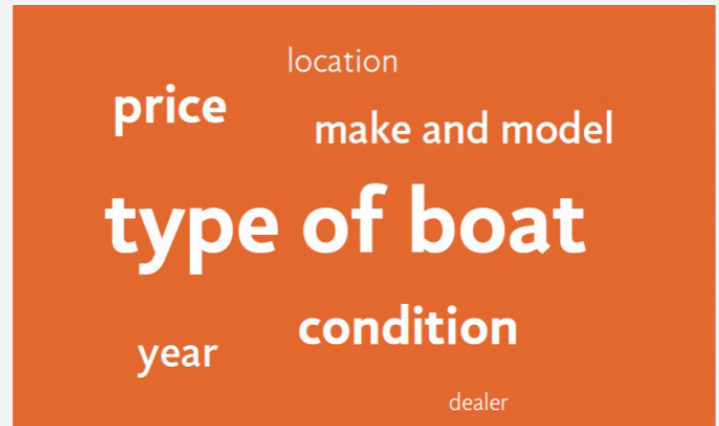
Point out imperfections – literally. Why would any dealer point to blemishes on boats they're trying to sell? Because it's the best way to build trust and credibility. A dealer shared that he recently sold a boat to someone who intended to buy from his competitor, all because they saw his videos where he literally pointed to the good and the bad. Photos and videos are great ways to visually "point to" imperfections that may

sound much worse than they look. That faded gelcoat may be minimal, and now you can accurately depict it, too. As mentioned above, include all details in the description, but use photos to show consumers every detail and eliminate any room for the imagination.

Based on Dominion Marine Media's internal data, boats with 40 to 50 photos have the highest number of leads per ad, and listings with video generate 16 percent more inquiries. The more information you share, the higher quality leads you will generate.

open bow with comfortable seating, while your wakeboarding buddies will appreciate the speed and agility of this bowrider.)

Promote the quality and reputation of your brands. Once prospects get beyond the initial search and identify the type

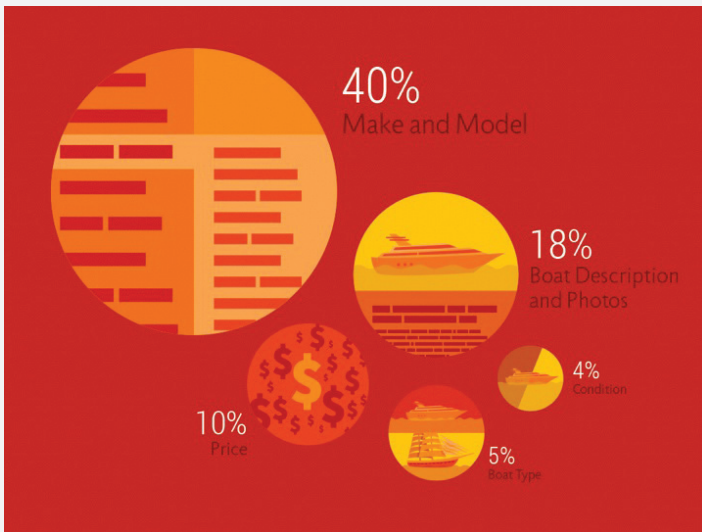


of boat they need, they care about a brand's reputation. They ask around for recommendations because they want to buy something that will last. As one consumer put it, "I wanted to buy the Honda Accord of speedboats." Brand equity is even more important to include in used boat listings because it often reinforces the quality and reputation that a brand has in the marketplace.

The ultimate tip for success is this: When you list your boats online, ask yourself, "If I was in the market for a boat, what information would I expect to find? And what would cause me to be really frustrated in the process?"

If you answer these questions honestly, you're destined to improve your next customer's buying experience.

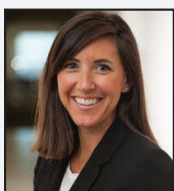
* Research is based on survey responses and live interviews with 540 boating consumers in the United States



3. "I didn't know what kind of boat I wanted at first, but I knew that I wanted to take the wife and kids out cruising and my buddies out wakeboarding."

Tip for success: Build your listings to mirror how consumers are shopping.

Focus on the type of boat first; it's how consumers start their search. Seventy-eight percent of consumers surveyed said that they start shopping for the type of boat they want in order to find the right boat with the right specs for them. In the boat description, include specifics that feature uses for the boat and target various buyers (ex: Your family will love the



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Courtney Chalmers has nearly 15 years experience in online and traditional marketing within the recreational and marine industry. She is a Yahoo! search marketing ambassador as a result of successfully managing expansive keyword campaigns. Chalmers has conducted search engine marketing-based training, as well as website and usability analyses for dealers and brokers nationwide. Her experience also includes B2B and B2C e-mail marketing, search engine optimization, social media strategy, and other guerilla marketing tactics for retailers and small businesses. She has participated on marketing panels at IBEX, the Miami International Boat Show, Marine Dealer Conference & Expo, and has been invited as a guest speaker at various dealer meetings.



Sell the Life

By Mike Alleva

We all wish we lived in a world where people would take one look at a boat, instantly fall in love, eagerly present their credit card, and seal the deal right then and there.

The unfortunate reality is that's rarely how the scenario plays out.

What more typically transpires underscores why lead nurturing and impression marketing are so important. For reasons your potential buyer may never reveal, they failed to purchase on the spot. But you can tell they're still showing interest. Follow up with them! Let your company be the first they think of when they are, in fact, ready to sign

on the all-important dotted line.

KEEP UP WITH THE TIMES

The majority of marketing and content is delivered to consumers in today's world is through e-mail. It's the most cost effective way to consistently stay top-of-mind with your customers.

There's no better way to keep out in front of your customers than by sending them a briefly worded, beautifully presented message delivered straight to their e-mail inbox. The majority of e-mail marketing platforms provide robust reporting. This is what allows you to track who opened it, what they looked at,

and how many times they came back to review it. Simply scan the reporting, and all the information is available, right at your fingertips. It operates as a sales assistant.

Here are a few fundamental basics you should follow when creating an e-marketing strategy:

Generate excitement. Get – and keep – customers excited with promotions and events. Create a sense of urgency that make the prospect feel like they're missing out on all the fun, and you'll soon transform them from browser into buyer.

Show and tell. Don't just write about your products; show them. We live in a visual world. Stop relying on wordy e-mails about events and sales promotions. Show customers and prospects products with beautiful images. Look at what other industries are doing. I'm sure you receive e-mail marketing from other companies outside the marine industry. How does Home Depot or Best Buy, for example, show their current promotions/deals? They rely on image-based marketing. And you should, too!

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If you left your boat or pontoon in the water over the summer, most likely you have a build up of algae and other nasty looking stuff on your boat. We remove it all so it performs better and looks better next year. Tell us you want your full acid washed and consider it done.
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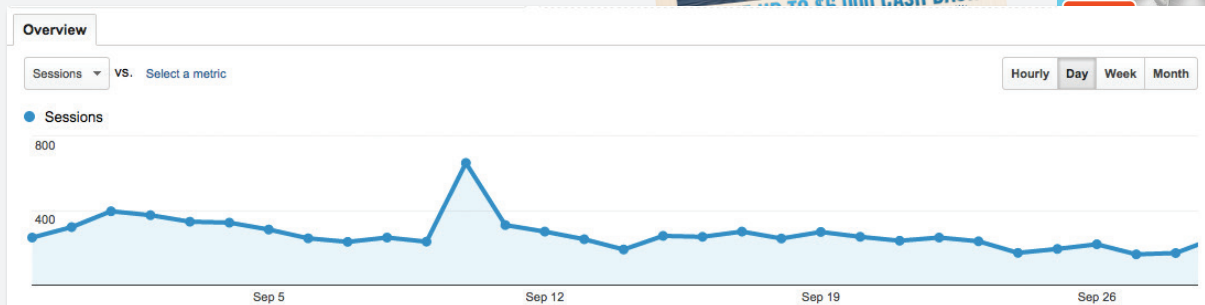
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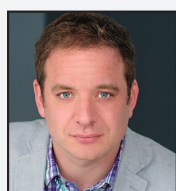
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Call to action. No matter what you're promoting, each item should have a specific call to action that delivers the customer back to that exact item they clicked on. Let's say you're promoting a boat with amazing incentive, and in the same e-mail you're also mentioning a service promotion for existing customers. These are two different buyers; they should not be linked to the same page. The boatbuyer should be linked to the exact boat(s) you are highlighting, and the service customer should be linked to a service page that has the ability to capture their information via a web form. Keep in mind that most customers will view or act on an e-mail promotion after hours, so you want to have an easy way



for them to tell you that they're interested. Your chances of converting that lead in hopes that they return to your site again during regular business hours is minimal.

Numbers don't lie. Within 24 to 48 hours after you distribute your next e-blast, do yourself a favor and take a peek at your Google Analytics. You should definitely see an increase in open and click-thru rates after employing the above-mentioned strategies. Following these guidelines means you're driving customers directly to your site, with a great imaged-based piece, filled with multiple call to actions – and that is sure to result in an uptick of interest and, eventually, sales.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Mike Alleva is vice president of national accounts and account management at Lighthouse Media Solutions, a forward-thinking media solutions and creative design company that specializes in identifying and executing strategies that leverage traditional and emerging technologies. Alleva has been providing marketing services in the boating industry for more than a decade. In addition to his role with Lighthouse, he also serves on MRAA's Young Leadership Advisory Council. Alleva can be reached at malleva@lhmediasolutions.com or 757-377-7336.