



# 10 Tips for Marketing to Professional Trades

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Professional tradespeople are a proud, independent group with a strong personal identity. They are entrepreneurial in character, but always remain builders-of-things at heart. They appreciate it when anyone expresses a sincere respect for their craft. When buying their tools and supplies, they expect a certain amount of attention, whether that occurs at a specialty dealer or in the big box retail environment. They feel their needs are special, and they expect products and services that cater to them.

Improving your success rate for marketing to professional tradespeople requires a good understanding of this unique identity, what messages resonate with them, what media they consume and, ultimately, how they make purchase decisions.

Here are 10 tips for marketing to pros that, in our experience, will help you build a meaningful connection that could lead to a long-lasting, profitable relationship built on trust and mutual respect.

**HEINZEROTH**  
Marketing Group

415 Y Blvd. Rockford, IL  
815.967.0929

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## 1 **Keep it real.**

Because time is money, pros are no-nonsense straight-shooters. They can spot B.S. from a mile away, so a results-oriented communication strategy must be crafted to earn their trust. Use plain-spoken language in your marketing materials, but never condescend. Be respectful of their craft and never lump them with DIYers. Be sure to answer: How will this product help improve their lives and streamline their business?

## 2 **Reputation is paramount.**

A pro's good name is the key to repeat business and referrals. It is the very foundation of their success. As a result, pros want a brand they can trust so they don't get callbacks – which equal wasted time, money and damage to their reputations. Anything you can do to maintain and strengthen their personal brands will be greatly appreciated.

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## **3** They are resistant to change.

Contractors see change as risk. Show them the benefits of change, and the risk of not changing. Contractors can no longer count on mark-ups as a major source of profit. Their profitability hinges on their ability to efficiently complete a project. Explain how your product or service can reduce man-hours and minimize callbacks.

## **4** Focus on the right target.

Experience shows that larger contractors are more resistant to change than newer, smaller contractors. Large contractors have more invested in a system — the status quo, if you will — and are less open to new ideas that will disrupt their operations. The new contractors are more likely to see change as a way to gain business that they would normally lose to a larger contractor. How can your product or service be presented to these contractors as new-business strategy that will pay dividends?

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## 5 **Keep training materials simple.**

Instruction manuals and installation guides are usually only used as forms of reference, so keep the illustrations and the language simple, clean and to the point. Because the great majority of contractors have access to smartphones, consider the use of short demonstration videos that they can pull up at the worksite.

## 6 **Recognize the rise of the mobile office.**

Their truck is their office, and their cell phone is their lifeline – used for both communication and product searches. A recent study shows that 72% of contractors use smartphones on the job, and 50% use tablets. Lesson learned: Make sure your website is mobile-friendly. Responsive website design is not only preferred in this day and age, it's mandatory.

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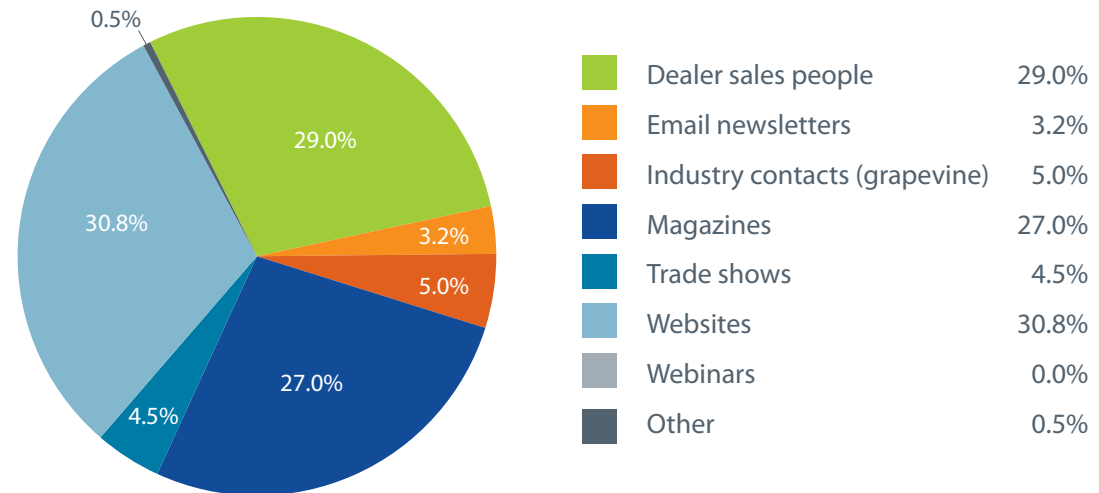
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## 7 Pros rely on digital media.

Contractors still use trade pubs when researching building materials, but digital media has come on strong and has actually surpassed print in importance.

*Interesting fact: 78% of a B2B buyers start their research with search engines, while only 51% of B2B marketers currently spend 10% or less of their budgets on search. Seems like a missed opportunity.*

### What's your top resource for detailed product information?



Source: Equipment World Connectivity Study, 2016 Report

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## 8 Contractors are not marketers.

They are builders, remodelers, installers, painters, etc. Anything that you can do to assist them in the marketing of their services is appreciated. This could come in the form of co-branded spec sheets (print or online/mobile), marketing materials and “certified contractor” programs. By earning a seal of approval from a nationally recognized brand and displaying it on their marketing platforms, they add instant credibility to their firms.

## 9 Consider apps.

In 2015, just over 50% of contractors used mobile apps for a variety of work-related tasks, including project management, bids, BIM, purchasing materials/equipment, accounting and customer relationship management. Consider development of a mobile app. Get started by converting your paper- or web-based product catalogs to this more efficient and user-friendly approach that is only gaining more traction, especially among younger contractors.

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## 10 Contractors are social.

42% of all contractors are active on social media, with 79% of contractors under the age of 35 active. 65% of contractors who are social media users visit Facebook on a daily basis. Takeaway: social media is just not for general consumers. Consider social media platforms as a way of distributing content and forging relationships with contractors.

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### Contractors' Most Visited Social Media Sites

 65% Facebook Daily

 68% Twitter Daily

 40% LinkedIn Daily

Source: Equipment World 2014 Connectivity Survey

To learn how Heinzeroth can help you target professional tradespeople, contact Roger Peterson at 815-847-7534 or [rpeterson@heinzeroth.com](mailto:rpeterson@heinzeroth.com)