

How to Use Your Trade Association Membership to Differentiate Your Company In the Mind of Your Prospects

By Mike Jeffries, President, Rivers of Revenue, LLC

For the past 10 years I've worked with hundreds of home service contractors and I'm amazed that few, if any, take full advantage of their membership in a trade association or group in their marketing.

When a typical homeowner/prospect is looking for a contractor they really don't know how to evaluate each company versus their competitors. They don't know what questions to ask or if they do know what questions to ask, they don't know what the answers should be.

Here's what we've found after surveying and talking to hundreds and hundreds of homeowners. Please keep in mind that prospects always want to know "what's in it for me" or "why would this be important in my decision".

There are 3 general areas that they want information about you and your company:

- Reputation and Stability of Your Company
- Experience With a Project Like Theirs
- Follow Up and Customer Service

Armed with this knowledge you can now use your membership to help position your company as the obvious choice to do business with.

Virtually all of our clients are members of their trade association. If our clients are not members, we strongly recommend that they join. BTW – Most of the "good guys" in each industry belong to their trade association.

The problem is that many contractors don't take the time to explain to their prospect what their membership means to them. They simply put the logo on their marketing, ads or website and leave it at that. Remember, the homeowner has no idea what that logo represents, so part of your job is to teach them.

FOR EXAMPLE:

It's estimated that 3 to 5% of all contractors belong to a professional association for their industry. For many industries the % is a lot less.

What else could you teach your prospective buyer about this?

How about:

- Your code of ethics
- Ongoing industry training in best practices
- Guidance in complying with new regulations and more

What if you hold or have held an officer or board member position? People like to know that you are responsible and that you take an active role in your association.

WHAT PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS DO YOU HOLD?

The number of professionals with certifications is even smaller than those that belong to an association. In most industries it is far less than 1%.

Again – don't just tell your prospects that you have the certification – explain the amount of time involved to get it, what % of your competitors hold it and what additional skills it gave you and how that will help the prospect get the service and results they really want.

Keep in mind that the real problem is most buyers are too embarrassed to ask questions about your membership. Many are afraid that this might make them look "dumb"... It is easier for them to think "he or she seems nice so they must be honest too."

Your goal is to *never* lose a prospect to a competitor that doesn't take advantage of all the benefits of belonging to your trade association. Not even one. You need to educate your prospects about the benefits of hiring you and by doing that they will realize the risks in hiring someone that is not a member.

Until Next Time, I Wish You Much Success

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Mike Jeffries is the founder of Rivers of Revenue LLC. He has built a reputation as a dynamic and sought after speaker based on his content rich presentations to local, regional and national contracting and service industry groups. Mike has presented his content rich programs in person and via webinar. As one executive director said "listening to Mike is like taking a drink from a fire hose, you better pay attention".

- Mike serves on the board of the northern New Jersey chapter of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI). He is also listed on their Panel of Experts nationally.
- He is a SuperStar Instructor for the Contractor College of the Painting and Decorating Contractors of America (PDCA).
- He is a past marketing director for the Professional Landscape Alliance of New Jersey.