

Ideal BUSINESS Ideal LIFESTYLE

Make more money, work less, and build your business around your life.

FSS Member Succeeds with a Unique Marketing Approach for a Unique Market

Traditional, image advertising—whether online or offline—is where you try to build up “name recognition” by putting your business name out there over and over again, and hope that if enough people see it enough times it will result in a sale. This method can work, but it’s very expensive and it takes a long time. It requires you to throw a whole lot of money at getting a message out to a huge audience, with no way of knowing whether they’re the right market for you. Also, there’s no guarantee that people who aren’t actively searching for flooring right now will remember the name of your store when they are in the market down the road a few months.

Of course, there are businesses that can play the traditional advertising game: the big box stores. They’ve got deep pockets and can afford to spend millions of dollars—online and offline—to create “name recognition.” If you try to play the game on their terms, you’ll most likely lose because they can massively outspend you. Fortunately, FSS membership offers strategies that leverage your unique strengths as a small business owner so you can compete—and win!—against the boxes and other competitors.

When Sarah Wolfe and her husband, John, bought Precision Flooring Solutions in 2012, they knew they weren’t going to build a thriving business on traditional advertising. The store, nestled in a tightly-knit vacation community on the outskirts of Lake Tahoe, needed a different approach to be successful.

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“It’s a big area for second homes and vacation rentals – we have more than 19,000 homes for a population of about 16,000 people,” says Sarah. “Traditional marketing approaches don’t really work in a market like ours. Putting an ad in the local newspaper doesn’t make much sense when it only comes out twice a week, and most of the homeowners aren’t likely to see it, anyway.”

Fortunately, Sarah had done her research, and learned about the Flooring Success Systems program from Jim’s articles in Floor Covering News. The FSS approach gave Sarah and John the flexibility to meet the needs of all their clients – whether they live in town, own a second home, or rent out a vacation property – while still maintaining higher margins and a consistent marketing approach.

“The Design Audit is so important in an area like this, where people have very different needs for their home. Not only do we need to talk about usage patterns, weather protection, and whether the home will be rented out or used as a vacation rental; we also get a lot of special requests because



the homes are often passed down within a family. If grandma put in a teal carpet, they want to keep the carpet teal when they update – otherwise the family will throw a fit!”

That approach is exactly what makes FSS members stand out in every market. It’s not about chasing the big box stores and competing on their terms – it’s about taking control of the message and showing clients what you do best.

Growing Your Business With **One Meeting a Week**

Acquiring customers the “old way” (e.g. radio, TV, newspapers, billboards) is getting more and more expensive. If your primary strategy for gaining new prospects relies on buying their attention, you’re going to be in a lot of trouble trying to compete against the big boxes.

Fortunately, there are numerous ways to attract and high quality clients which are much more affordable and effective, and which you have access to as an FSS member. Today I’m going to show you how to cultivate a sales force that doesn’t require a paycheck, doesn’t require commissions, and works tirelessly to bring you a regular, reliable stream of prospects who are predisposed to like and trust you.

I’m talking about strategic networking.

Now, networking isn’t exactly a new strategy. There are probably many of you out there who belong to the Chamber of Commerce, or who’ve joined a networking group at some point or another. That’s a great start, and it’s probably landed you a customer or two over the years.



The first thing you need to understand is why referrals are so important for your business

But what I’m talking about goes further than that. It’s about developing a strategy – a system – for your networking efforts, so you can turn the occasional referral into a reliable stream of new business.

The first thing you need to understand is why referrals are so important for your business. Flooring is an industry built on trust. Your clients spend thousands of dollars, invite strangers into their homes, and trust them to literally rip apart their floors (and hope that everything gets put back together even better than it once was). But building trust with potential customers one by one is a time-consuming process.

That’s exactly why referrals are so valuable. When you get a referral, you’re trading on the referrer’s credibility instead of your own. Joining a networking group allows you to vastly expand your sphere of influence. Instead of having to build a direct relationship of trust with every single prospect, your networking partners can use their established relationships to direct business your way.

And aside from the cost – building and maintaining referral relationships isn’t free, but it’s incredibly cost effective – one of the main benefits of referrals is that clients who are referred to you are far more likely to close the sale, and often at a higher price point or margin. Referral clients also tend to be more loyal **and** more likely to refer you to even more prospects.



How to find and develop a strategic network

There are a lot of business networking opportunities out there. When I talk about networking strategically, there are two aspects I want you to focus on: **where** you network, and **how** you network.

Networking is most effective when you're really able to devote your time to developing strong relationships. I highly recommend that when you're starting out, you limit yourself to one or two groups where you can focus your efforts.

There are a lot of options out there: the local Chamber of Commerce, Business Networking International (BNI), LeTip, service organizations like the Rotary Club, Optimist's Club, Kiwanis, – not to mention local organizations. But what really matters is finding a group that you click with, and one where there are a lot of people who can potentially refer you. That means looking for real estate agents, property managers, interior designers, various contractors and handymen, mortgage lenders – all people who are likely to be regularly doing business with your ideal clients.

Once you've found the right group, your goal should be to go all-in on demonstrating your value. Attend all of the group's meetings. Introduce yourself to everyone, both guests and regulars, and seek opportunities to have one-on-one meetings where you can both learn more about the other person's business. Be clear about exactly who you'd like to see referred to you. And whenever possible, try to educate the group as a whole about your industry and why you in particular can be a valuable referral partner.

Scott Perron, a veteran flooring dealer who currently owns two Florida businesses: Floors 4 Pros and 24/7 Floors, has attributed up to **30% of his growth in his first two years in business to his networking efforts** – and that's all on an investment of just \$1200 in yearly membership fees. In addition to monthly meetings and scheduling one-on-one meetings, Scott is also a big fan of holding open houses. He invites everyone in his networking group over to his store after hours. For the price of some appetizers and refreshments, Scott is able to give people an up close and personal look at what sets him apart from his competition, AND he strengthens his networking relationships along the way.

If you've dabbled in networking before but never really taken it seriously, now is your chance. You'll be amazed by the difference it can make in your business when you develop genuine, authentic relationships with fellow



business owners. But remember: nothing takes the place of world-class service. Before you can ask people to refer you, you have to ensure that you're running the type of business anyone would be happy to be associated with.

Here's a strategy to maximize your networking success.

Subscribe everyone in your networking group to the Neighborhood Advisor and e-Neighborhood Advisor newsletter. This will keep you in front of them week in and week out with fun, informative, welcome, entertaining, educational content, which will create total top of mind awareness. It will also give them a comfort level with your business because over and over again they'll see client testimonials, as well as all the new and returning clients. They'll see that you've built a community around your business. It will also educate them on your referral reward program. Then next time they have the opportunity to refer a floor dealer, they'll instantly think of you, and feel confident about referring their friend, relative or business colleague.

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