

# 40 Ways to Make Your Phone Ring

A compilation of the unique and the tried-and-true tactics that every remodeling-services marketer should consider, particularly in a slower economy

By Kenneth W. Betz, Senior Editor



**Y**our phone isn't likely to ring these days unless you do something to make it. And calling your office line from your mobile phone doesn't count.

Many remodelers say referrals are their lifeblood — and they pin themselves on that fact. Still, it doesn't hurt to take some action to stimulate those referrals if they're currently making your phone ring the hook.

More than 100 readers responded to our online survey and shared their ideas for making the phone ring. We've collected a sampling of those ideas below. In some cases we've refined or combined several of the thoughts, but they nevertheless represent the collective thinking of *Qualified Remodeler* readers from around the country.

**1. Contact past clients.** Remodelers should contact previous customers of all the services you offer; they may not remember everything you do. Personal phone calls, letters, or a postcard can do the trick. For many, the allure of having your personal attention to their project might make it worth their while to remodel now vs. later, when budget logs may again impact scheduling.



**advertise locally.** The more the better. Place new ads in a local or neighborhood paper and offer a discount. Many readers also cite the value of trying different advertising techniques, such as shopping carts and direct mail, in areas where your customers are likely to see

**offer financing.** There is a common misperception that tighter credit conditions have led banks and other improvement lenders to exit the market. Not true. There is a range of secured and unsecured financing options available to your customers. An advertised offer of low interest rates will certainly get some consumers to pick up the phone.

**offer affordable jobs.** Not all remodelers are set up for small projects, but the time is certainly right. A low-cost small addition that a average homeowner can afford can add value to their home. Small jobs and finished basement projects are quicker and therefore can be priced in price ranges that would get any into action.

**optimize your Web site.** Remodelers are discovering that the most qualified leads come from the Internet. Success comes from incorporating keywords to give your target customers a reason to visit your Web site. This process is called search engine optimization or SEO. For more information, see our Search Engine Contractor column on page 10 of this issue.

**stay in touch with your entire list.** Use a monthly e-mail newsletter or blog to regularly communicate with all current and past customers as well as your prospects. Your company is the first they think of when they've got a project, and you're going to get the call.

**7. Canvass, canvass.** Target neighborhoods in the same price point as past customers. The old ways of doing business still work. The key is to be consistent and to incorporate it into the normal course of business — before and after sales calls. The messages can incorporate points of courtesy: "We are working on a job down the block; let us know if there is something we can do to reduce any noise or disruption," or "We'd be happy to stop by and offer an estimate." Leave a flier if no one answers the door.

**8. Target mailings promoting Web sites and seminars.** Do targeted mailings that direct potential customers to your Web site and to seminars and special events that you sponsor. The goal is to move them through your system of evaluating them as qualified leads. Once they have more information about your company, they are more likely they will be to call.

**9. Show your stuff and establish yourself as a remodeling expert.** Participate in a local home show and present a seminar on the remodeling process, design trends or another topic of your choice. This establishes you as an expert and gives you more exposure than a pass-by at your booth.

**10. Home sweet home tour.** Take part in (or create) a local remodelers' home tour. You will find motivated clients in people who tour, and they will already be familiar with your work. Many NARI and NAHBR chapters have remodeled home tours that generate a lot of local traffic. These events typically generate local news coverage and the promotion costs are shared with other remodelers.

**11. Join the club.** Establish a referral incentive with service orga-

nizations, discounting the price and donating to the club.

**12. Constant contact.** Current customers are more satisfied when you stay in touch. Satisfied customers are five times more likely to refer you to others. Keep in contact via a series of planned touches: personal site visits, phone calls, end-of-project walk-throughs, monthly e-newsletters and special offers for past clients. Schedule follow-up warranty visits and use them to start conversations about new work.

**13. It's in the mail.** If you have never used coupon mailers, now may be a good time to give them a try. Use coupon mailers like Valpak or other direct mail services, and offer a discount or freebie.

**14. Wrap it up.** Use truck-wrap signage with big logos and full wraps to increase your visibility in your community and in the areas you service. With the widespread use of mobile phones, your phone number on the side of the truck when associated with a strong marketing message is more powerful than ever.

**15. Special services.** Try ads in the "special services" section of your local newspaper. These often offer better rates than display advertising and keep your name in front of potential customers for a longer period of time for a reasonable cost.

**16. Person-to-person networking.** You'd be surprised how many remodelers don't take the time to network the old-fashioned way. Join the Rotary Club, chamber of commerce, Toastmasters or similar groups. Make it your job to take people who are centers of influence to lunch, such as property managers or interior designers.

**17. Seek complementary partnerships.** Partner with a local home furnishings company to hold remodeling seminars in their showroom, or work with a financial planner to present a seminar about aging in place — financing remodeling and growing a nest egg so that older persons can remain in their homes.

**18. Stop the presses.** Submit press releases for awards, training classes and anything else you think might be newsworthy. Develop a relationship with reporters — business, lifestyle, home, for example — so that you become their source for remodeling information.

**19. Association ties.** Leverage the ties you have to professional associations. Use those affiliations and professional designations, such as CR, CGG, CKD, etc., in your advertising and promotional materials.

**20. Promote lower ticket items.** If homeowners aren't in the market for a full kitchen or bath remodel, suggest countertop or sink packages as an alternative to a full remodel.

**21. Make it personal.** Instead of — or in addition to — mass mailings and advertising, send personal notes to potential clients as well as to previous customers.

**22. Offer what the house needs.** Provide handyman services. If homeowners aren't remodeling, they still need maintenance and repair work. Make sure architects, designers, trade partners and previous as well as current customers know you're offering this service.

**23. Sign up for Internet referral services.** Advertise online and sign up with a lead-generating company such as Yodle.com, ServiceMagic.com, EveryContractor.com, RenovationExperts.com and