

Episode 77 - Nancy O'Hare-Zika - Marketing Ideas You Need [00:22:07]

Intro: Welcome to Profiles In Prosperity. The leading podcast for residential service contractors sponsored by Service Roundtable and hosted by David Heimer.

David Heimer: Hi, this is David Heimer, welcome to Profiles In Prosperity. Nancy O'Hare-Zika is the owner of Yellow Dog Creative formerly Swick Media Services. Yellow Dog Creative is in Michigan and focuses on the marketing needs of companies in the skilled trades industry. Nancy has a long rich history in our industry. She was the marketing director and general manager of Swick Home Services in Marquette, Michigan. For the last seven years, she has been the owner of Yellow Dog Creative. In that capacity, she and her team worked with hundreds of companies, large and small all across North America with one goal in mind, make the phone ring, which is a very worthy goal indeed. Nancy is a married mom of three kids and two golden retrievers. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, fishing and gardening. So Nancy O'Hara-Zika, welcome to Profiles In Prosperity.

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: Hello, thank you so much for having me. It's a pleasure.

David Heimer: Let's go back to the beginning, how did you get into our industry?

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: So I was wearing the hat of the marketing director and GM of a plumbing shop here in the upper peninsula of Michigan. The owner of that company, Tom Swick, was kind of a visionary, honestly, and this was, I'm talking before plumbers and people in the trades really did much advertising, traditional advertising as far as television. They did billboards and radio, but not a lot of TV. And he had a vision to create this branding commercial. And I say branding, but honestly, back when we did this the very first time, branding wasn't even a thing, no one said brand yourself, brand your company. But he had this vision for this really beautiful commercial that showed the plumbing industry the way he felt it should be portrayed. And that's very respectfully

Episode 77 - Nancy O'Hare-Zika - Marketing Ideas You Need [00:22:07]

and very beautifully shown as the heroes, not the butt crack jolts and the dancing toilets. And he wanted to really, you know, bring up the level of respect.

We were involved in a couple of different organizations, better business organizations, and we won some awards for that commercial. And what happened after that was very organic. You know, other people who saw that video started calling and asking if we could help them make a video for their company. And it started, you know how it is with Service Nation, Service Nation Alliance and the Service Roundtable members, you get friends in the industry, other companies that aren't in your market; that you kind of work together, either as an AB group, for example. And very quickly, these people who were friends of ours at Swick Plumbing started to ask for help. So, you know, Swick Media was born.

And it was never planned, it was never an intended industry, and we were absolutely 100% video-driven at that time. And so, we started helping these six, seven companies. Fast forward seven, eight years, and Tom Swick at this point now has gone from being just plumbing to plumbing, heating, cooling, and then he added electrical near the end, but then was looking to retire. And at that point, I knew that obviously the new owner of Swick Home Services, which we're now called. Didn't want their GM and marketing person running this other kind of side marketing business, so I had to make a decision at that point to stay on as GM and marketing director and let the other stuff go or step down. And that's what I chose to do and start at my kitchen table. And at that point, I was working with seven companies in the United States and we have grown at this point. Now we work with probably 200 plus companies across North America, and we have expanded our services. Also, we are no longer just video, which we were back in the beginning. Like I said, we now have expanded to really offer all the marketing departments that people in the trades are looking for, but we are still exclusive to the

Episode 77 - Nancy O'Hare-Zika - Marketing Ideas You Need [00:22:07]

trades.

David Heimer: Very nice. You've told us a little bit about Yellow Dog Creative; what else should we know about Yellow Dog Creative?

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: The team here at Yellow Dog Creative, we're definitely known and we have been referred to, and it wasn't something we self-proclaimed, but now we do. We're kind of the storytellers of the trades, right? Because we work exclusively in the trades, I think that really is a big advantage because that's what we know. That's the world that we live in - we know what works, but the other part of that is that we don't work with competitors, right? So just like being part of Service Nation Alliance or Service Roundtable, you can network with other people and find out what they're doing. So if I have a partner in Boston, for example, that's running an awesome campaign, there's no reason why a partner of ours in Utah or LA or Quarterly in Idaho can't use and benefit from that same information that someone in Boston is doing.

So, you know, I think it's really a beneficial collaboration if you will. And it is kind of a one-stop-shop, which is really nice because we work with a lot of companies that the owners are wearing a lot of hats and they don't have time to do the marketing part successfully, and they feel like it's an afterthought. You know, they feel like they want to give it more attention, but they don't know how. And we work with companies with four technicians and we work with companies with 400 technicians. And the degree to which they work with us is completely dependent on their needs. If they just need us to make their creative and push a button and hand it over and let their team deal with it, that's great. But if they need more hand-holding and they need someone to contact printers and get direct mails in place, we can do that too, and that's kind of one of the nice benefits. So, you know, we have different levels of involvement, I guess.

Episode 77 - Nancy O'Hare-Zika - Marketing Ideas You Need [00:22:07]

David Heimer: Yeah, that is nice. So you guys can be completely turnkey, do everything for people. But if they want something just very specific and narrow, you can deliver that as well. That kind of flexibility is great.

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: Yeah, for sure.

David Heimer: So you work with a lot of contractors in our industry. If I were a small contractor, with very little money for marketing, what are some of the low-cost ways I could market my business?

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: We have a whole breakout on this. And so, I have information and I am absolutely willing to email this information to anybody who wants to reach out, but there are tons of ways. Low budget marketing - and I'll chat about three really quickly that I think have been the most successful. Now that COVID is starting to wind down and people are going to start getting back into arenas and basketball games and football games, a lot of our smaller guys, actually, personalized water bottles and donated them to their area high schools and elementary schools to sell at events. So, it's a donation to the school. They sell these water bottles, for example, for a dollar a piece, and they make that money. So if you donate 5,000 bottles of water, they're going to make \$5,000 off of that. But everyone in the stands at that football game or that basketball game, or at a parent-teacher conference, they're going to be walking around with water bottles with your label on it, which is really a very, very low cost, low involvement, great way to get your name out there as a community leader.

Another great low-cost idea is to run what I call a gold star giving because that's what we called it at Swick. It is an online Facebook contest where every month you donate \$500 to a charity in your area. The nice thing about running a Facebook contest is it's

Episode 77 - Nancy O'Hare-Zika - Marketing Ideas You Need [00:22:07]

multifaceted. You're going to increase your Facebook audience by doing that. And what we did is we actually asked for people to nominate organizations and it could be anybody. It didn't have to be like a 501C3 Redit. It didn't have to be a humane society. It could be. Sally is playing her flute in Switzerland and she's raising money. It could be anybody who could run for this \$500, but people had to vote through the website. So, it pushes people to your website, they have to register with an email address to vote. They can vote every day, so there's people coming to your website every single day.

Once the contest is over the organization wins, then you put those pictures of that organization on Facebook, tag the group, and they start spreading it. And so, it's a very low amount of time involvement on your part because the website can be set up in a way that it's all done automatically. At the end of the month, the contest ends and boom, you know who the winner is. I would bring them in to have a check presentation, and then I would submit that to the newspaper and that was always free. So, that is a great way to go from 200 followers to 2000 followers on Facebook, very, very quickly with a very low... at \$500 a month, you know, you're talking six grand a year, very low cost for the amount of impact and email addresses that you gained from that campaign.

David Heimer: And so, you're looking for local organizations that have supporters and those supporters are ideally going to be hitting your website every day and voting.

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: Yeah, every month. And the best thing about it is, say we have... we have a university here, Northern Michigan University. Their dance team, for example, was one of our contestants one month. Every single member of that dance team was sharing the Swick home services post asking people to vote. So we now have 30 people, and that was just one of the three, right? So those organizations, and then of course, you know, you tag the NMU dance team when they win and all the girls that

Episode 77 - Nancy O'Hare-Zika - Marketing Ideas You Need [00:22:07]

were on the dance team tagged themselves, and it becomes kind of a rock rolling down the hill. I mean, it really picks up momentum rather quickly, and it's again super low cost. So, that's a really valuable one.

And I just want to also mention that not everyone is ready for a film crew, right? Not everyone is ready for Yellow Dog Creative, and that's okay. You know, you don't have to be. If the coronavirus has given the people, especially in this industry, a green card to do things at lower costs, I'm not kidding you. People are so used to zooms and iPhone videos. If you film yourself in your car or in your van, after a call, after a great install, or you film yourself while you're doing an install, or you do a testimonial while you're sitting in the customer's driveway, talking about what you just did, it is perfectly acceptable to do that on an iPhone. It doesn't have to be perfectly lit. And the sound does not have to be miked and perfect. Because of how we've lived the last year, people are more forgiving right now than ever. So I would say just push the record, speak from your heart, tell your story of your company. And don't worry if you can't afford a production crew to come and do that, it really isn't necessary.

David Heimer: Yeah, it seems like production values are not all that important for a lot of things. If you look at the videos that have gone viral, a lot of them have zero production values actually.

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: For sure. Absolutely. So, you know, getting your story out there and branding your company is much, much more important than how much money you spent to create that story or to tell the story. So I think you should not be afraid of that and not feel like, oh, I'm not big enough or I can't afford to have it done professionally. I think now is the perfect opportunity to take that cart and just run with it. There really are no rules, so have fun with it, set up a GoPro and record an install and then, you know,

Episode 77 - Nancy O'Hare-Zika - Marketing Ideas You Need [00:22:07]

time-lapse it so it takes 30 seconds to show an entire, you know...

David Heimer: Oh, interesting.

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: Set that sucker up and just let her go, and people are fascinated by that. And I think that there's just a lot of value in that, and making sure that you're posting something on your social media three to four times a week that is not always about selling, that's another thing. Put people's birthdays on there. If you have an employee that's been with you for 20 years, take a picture of that person. You have a bio of that human, make the human connection because that's what community members want to see.

David Heimer: Great ideas, and not expensive either, which is great. What are some of the new trends in marketing that we should know about?

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: If you hear the term OTT, that means "over the top" which is becoming a huge player in the marketing field. That is your streaming platform. That's people who are watching television, but are not subscribed to cable or broadcast TV, right? So these are your Slings, your Hulu's, and your Netflix. Those people that platform is very quickly becoming a huge player. And you can really target a lot more specifically, I guess, than you can, for example than broadcast. If you're in a huge area like Dallas, Texas, very few companies service the entire area that a broadcast spot would show, where with OTT over the top with these smaller platforms, you can really micro-target at a much safer level. So the people who are actually seeing your spot are actually within your service area, making the eyeballs more valuable, of course.

David Heimer: Let me ask you a question about OTT for a second. So, can you buy advertising from Sling?

Episode 77 - Nancy O'Hara-Zika - Marketing Ideas You Need [00:22:07]

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: You can buy advertising anywhere you have the money to spend it on.

David Heimer: Sling specifically sells advertising?

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: Yes. So Sling, Hulu and Netflix, they all will do that, right? So it could be on their platform. It could be people who perhaps have Sling at a different level, so depending on what the membership level is. All of those streaming platforms, you have the ability to place advertising. And when I say that, the only caveat to that is if you are buying - not OTT, but if you are buying social media, TikTok is a very non-user-friendly platform for advertising. So that right now is the only one that we're finding difficulty, just because the platform isn't set up for it and there is no narrowing of the search. So, that is one thing we're having a lot of people ask us is TikTok, and we are at this point right now, frowning on advertising on TikTok because you can't narrow it. You just can't buy it properly right now.

David Heimer: Okay.

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: So the other thing that I think is really, really essential right now for a lot of our people in the trades is recruitment platforms. Recruiting has been of course at the forefront of everyone's mind for years, and it's only getting more, so there's a lot of really cool ways to market your specific ad. One is by using geo-targeting, geo-fencing, we have a lot of our partners that are dropping a pin on major supply houses and large construction projects and trade schools, and then, also their biggest competitors. You know, the guy in town that has the 400 caps, dropping a pin on those locations and advertising to people who come within a mile radius, once they click on your video once, then the IP address is captured and that person will continue to see

Episode 77 - Nancy O'Hare-Zika - Marketing Ideas You Need [00:22:07]

your ads for the next month.

And so, that's a really effective way to get your recruitment message out there, because, for the most part, there's two ways you're going to be able to get talent. You're either going to grow your own, or they're already sitting in someone else's vehicle. So, those are the two action spots that you're going to have to approach if you want to try to get to these people. So for the most part, these guys are not the people who are sitting at home watching Jeopardy. They are going to be more of a non-traditional group of people to get to. So by being on their phone at lunchtime in between, maybe they're going to Google how to do something, they want a manual for a piece of equipment and your ad is going to be something that they have to get through to get to the content they're looking for. So, that's a really super effective way to recruit yourself and get your message out there.

A few things to remember with recruiting, for the most part, everyone offers, you know, competitive pay. Everyone pretty much offers benefits. Everyone pretty much offers a stocked van, it's more than that. The people who are coming into the trades now are really focused on work-life balance. They want to know what sort of a schedule, are they going to be working 12 hour days? Are they going to be working Christmas and holidays? So, making sure that your culture is part of your story so they know as they walk in what they're getting, that's really what you're trying to show with these videos. So stay away from the stuff that everyone offers and trying to set yourself apart is really going to be the key to recruiting properly.

Another great way to recruit is by doing what we call recruit nurturing. Recruit nurturing is a lead nurturing platform where you place your recruitment video somewhere, somewhere out in the world wide web, whether it's on your local news websites or

Episode 77 - Nancy O'Hare-Zika - Marketing Ideas You Need [00:22:07]

whether it's a YouTube video or it's streaming. As soon as they click on the video, it will bring them to a career page that talks about your company, and also leads them down the path to fill out a survey. The survey is a hundred percent customized based on what you are looking for as the employer. So if you're looking for a master plumber, you can ask that question. If you're looking for an HVAC install crew, those are the sort of questions. You know, we have a gentleman, DJ Alstrom, that we work with over in Roanoke, Virginia. He just wanted someone literally with a pulse, right? He figures I can train them. I don't care. So he really didn't ask any survey questions to either approve them or disprove them for the next step. He just took everybody.

David Heimer: Do you have a pulse?

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: Do you have a pulse? Can you read this questionnaire? If they check, yes, they're going to the next stage. Because he honestly feels like he doesn't necessarily want people that have experienced it if they're really inclined, right? If they have great customer service skills, he'll train them to do the job. So then what happens next is it brings them on, and this is all automated. Like this is zero - this is hands-off. It brings them right to a testing platform. Whether it be One Score, Wonderlic, whatever your company uses to do your pre-employment screening for characteristics and intuition and cognitive skills, it will put them right through that without any effort on your part. You will then at that point, get the results and they will automatically move forward right up to the point where they can schedule an interview.

And you don't have to go all the way to that point, but we have some companies that it is absolutely hands-off until they're sitting at a Zoom phone interview. So, that's really a good way to recruit. It's pretty low cost. I want to say, most companies invest two to \$3,000 a month to run that sort of recruitment campaign. And if it yields you, one

Episode 77 - Nancy O'Hare-Zika - Marketing Ideas You Need [00:22:07]

technician, it's paid for itself 20 fold. So I would say right now, if someone were to ask me what's the hot button right now in marketing, it is definitely the recruitment team.

David Heimer: Sounds interesting. I've looked at a few of the applicant tracking systems and I'm really impressed with what they do. It just automates so much of the work of finding the right person. It's great stuff.

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: And the fact that you can completely customize it to your needs, you're not trying to fit into someone else's box. The entire thing is customized from what sort of video you create, all the way up to the sort of questions you're asking this person to get them to the next step. And the whole time, once you capture email addresses and cell phone numbers, that automatically launches emails that are like, this is why you want to work at XYZ company, look at how awesome we are. Some culture videos start getting emailed and texted to them. You know, how's your day going? Your day would be awesome if you work with XYZ. And you can completely customize it so your message is being shown. And I think that's really, really important.

David Heimer: So Nancy, this has been a fascinating discussion. I really appreciate your time here. If someone is listening to this podcast and they wanted to contact you, what would be the best way to do that?

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: The best way would be to jump on the website, it's yellowdogcreative.com. On their website if you scroll down, there are going to be pictures of the entire team. And if you click on the pictures, it will give you all the contact information. Our email addresses, our phone numbers, and even my cell phone number is on there. And I always extend the invitation to anyone who hears this. You do not need to be a Yellow Dog Creative partner. You don't have to be working with us to pick up the phone and ask questions. That's what we're here for. We're marketing nerds, we

Episode 77 - Nancy O'Hare-Zika - Marketing Ideas You Need [00:22:07]

love this stuff. I love nothing more than a company to call me and say, hey, I have an idea for a contest or a direct mail, what is your thought on that? I welcome anyone really to just pick up the phone and ask the question. And if you want to look at some of the stuff that we do, feel free to reach out, I'd be glad to chat with anybody who's interested, and for sure, help you make some marketing decisions that are going to benefit you and help you tell your story.

David Heimer: Fantastic. So, Nancy O'Hara-Zika, thank you for doing this with us, and it's really been a great conversation.

Nancy O'Hara-Zika: Thanks for inviting me on. And I look forward to chatting with you all soon.

Outro: We're always looking for good ideas and interviews for our podcast. If you have an idea or maybe you think you should be interviewed, just shoot an email to profiles Prosperity@serviceroundtable.com. That's profiles Prosperity@serviceroundtable.com. If you think what we're doing has any value, it would be very helpful if you would give us a great rating on iTunes. Thanks for your support. Hope to see you again soon. Bye.