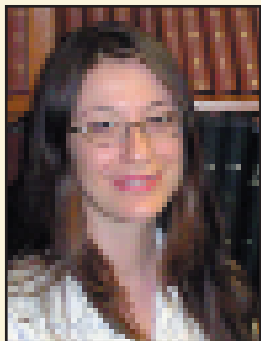


Tapping Into the Information-Age Consumer



“The Information Age.” Yes, the term tends to be a bit overused, but what does it mean for the water industry? According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 35 percent of 25- to 29-year-olds owned homes as of 1997. In the 30 to 34 age group, the number was even higher, 53 percent and growing. This is the age group of consumers who need a new treatment system for their home.

Drinking water customer satisfaction surveys have shown that because of taste, odor, or health concerns, a significant percentage of consumers are now looking to add some type of treatment system in their home. The question is where will the consumer purchase the much needed system?

If in the past, your customers first opened the yellow pages and looked for a water dealer, today they may take a different route. Perhaps a quick search on the Internet and a short stop at Home Depot might be what takes care of that new homeowner’s problem water. Unfortunately, this is not the answer water dealers want to hear. But while there are consumers who try to take matters into their own hands, there is still something to be said about customer service and true knowledge of the trade. Providing your customers with solutions specifically tailored to their water needs will ensure you stand out from the generic “one-size-fits-all” system. But, most importantly, keep up with the Information Age.

A large number of water businesses have developed websites. This is a growing trend, which is becoming not only a necessity, but also a requirement for successful businesses today. A website can help provide customers with a brief overview of your products, services and competitive prices, moreover, it will be a quick and easy way for them to locate you. However, it is very important to keep your websites updated. In addition, be proactive, target new homeowners in your area by offering discounts that could help establish a long-lasting, repeat-business relationship.

Quick Facts:

Demographic results indicate younger age groups (30’s and 40’s) and those with higher education levels (college or more) are more likely to purchase filtering/treatment devices and bottled water. When asked respondents why they boiled, filtered, treated tap water, or purchased bottled water, the most frequent responses cited were health related issues, 33.3 percent; followed by taste, 27.7 percent; and convenience, 17.5 percent.

- 82 percent (which equates to 231million nationally) drink tap water.
- 56 percent (157 million) drink water straight from the tap.
- 37 percent (104 million) reported using a filtering or treatment device.
- 74 percent (208 million) purchase and drink bottled water.
- 20 percent (56 million) drink bottled water exclusively

(Analysis and Findings of The Gallup Organization’s Drinking Water Customer Satisfaction Survey.)

With all this in mind, make sure to check our Special Feature section coming up in the November issue of *WQP*. We asked Nimbus Water Systems, Inc., Toronto, ON, Canada, to share some of the creative marketing ideas they use to make their customers aware of the products and services they provide, and establish long and successful business relationships.

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