

For Everything There is a Season ...

By Brad Good

The primary definition of the word “season” on Dictionary.com is: “One of the four periods of the year (spring, summer, autumn and winter), beginning astronomically at an equinox or solstice, but geographically at different dates in different climates”—and that is generally the way we tend to think of the word when we hear it.

When we look a bit further down at the third and fourth definitions, we find something just different enough to apply in an interesting way to find new customers, revive old relationships and explore new marketing channels. Definitions three and four, respectively, read: “A period of the year when something is best or available: e.g., the oyster season,” and “a period of the year marked by certain conditions, activities, etc.: e.g., baseball season.”

Seasons are a marketer’s best friend (and possibly even his or her fortune teller). One of the first hurdles in marketing is “who”; the next is “when.” Understanding life’s seasons as they relate to your product or service can help you find answers to these questions.

For instance, do you follow your local and regional news? Have you “struck while the iron was hot” to coordinate a product or service with a new revelation in the marketplace? Have you considered which season

in Pennsylvania, smart water treatment companies are marketing in areas not only “where” fracking is in the news, but “when” it is in the news.

To Market or Not to Market

Sometimes, seasons can tell us when not to market, or at least what not to market. We have just finished the season with arguably the largest spending on things other than capital expenses—from mid-November to the New Year, few people consider large purchases that will not end up being wrapped or having a giant red bow attached to them.

Emergencies and unforeseen circumstances always arise, however, so you need to remain in the forefront of your customers’ minds (see “Play It One-on-One” in the April 2013 issue of *Water Quality Products* for more on that). Do not disappear, but be careful not to get pulled into holiday specials for the wrong product for the season.

I am not suggesting you shun all marketing opportunities that come your way leading up to the holidays—far from it. I am suggesting weighing the cost of marketing and anticipated return on investment versus an early spring campaign. Think about it: The holidays have settled down and the annual visits by friends and family may have resulted in embarrassed hosts if the water in the house had a bad taste or odor. Capitalize on those emotions.

At the same time, you can use a similar scenario to plan late fall marketing campaigns selling service and accessories to your existing customers. It is time to get them ready for the holidays and perhaps a visit from a finicky in-law. Capitalize on what your customers need when they need it.

Seasons dictate how you market your product, what product you market and who would be interested based on what is going on. Take a look at the events and happenings around you and make them work for your marketing. Here are a few examples of things to look for to get started:

- Environmental (remember the fracking?);
- Water-related news (bacteria in wells; chemicals in city water);

- Philanthropy and fundraisers (sponsorship opportunities; annual events in your city);
- Financial data (identify and market to recent home refinancers); and
- Hot legal issues (healthcare is on people’s minds, so their healthy drinking water should be, too).

Times of the year to consider are:

- Late August (getting ready for routines; better working appliances);
- October to early November (pre-holiday service—we have a client offering no delivery fee on salt. “Buy a year’s worth without delivery charges!”);
- Early spring (post holidays); and
- Early summer (water spots on clean cars; kids drinking from the hose).

Of course, because I live and work just northwest of Philadelphia, some of my examples are relative to the lifestyle and climate of the eastern U.S. There are completely different climates and seasons in the Southwest, for instance, or the Pacific Northwest, but it works the same way. Find the seasonal hot button and press it when it’s time.

Remember to identify the times of year when the products you sell will be most appealing to your customers and potential customers. Create a plan around it, and understand the cost of marketing that product. Larger-ticket items or service calls will most likely return more dollars to you after a sale.

With the right seasonal mindset, a bit of patience and maybe some trial and error, you will find success and meet a hungry marketplace at just the right time for a product they need or want. That is the key to seasonality: Let the seasons help you market your business at just the right time to the right prospect with the right solution. *wqp*

Brad Good is partner for the Good Marketing Group. Good can be reached at bgood@goodgroupllc.com or 484.902.8914.

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Using seasonal events to determine when and how to market



is better for new business versus servicing or marketing to new versus existing customers? These are the important questions to ask.

Let me give you a real-world example. Here in Pennsylvania, hydraulic fracturing (fracking) has caused quite a stir when it comes to the environment. We have met many water treatment professionals, and when it comes to fracking, they all say the same thing: “It’s been great for my business.” The debate over the pros and cons of fracking will continue, but here