

Successful Advertising Messages for 2012

IS YOUR SALES PITCH STUCK IN THE 1980S?



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Note: In our winter issue, we discussed advertising media in 2012 with a special focus on Yellow Pages. This article shifts our attention from advertising media to advertising messages for selling residential garage doors.

Most door dealers know they need to advertise, but their challenge is, “What should my ad say?” This article attempts to answer that question for your 2012 advertising.

Is your sales pitch stuck in the 1980s?

On April 2, 2008, the Toledo Blade newspaper published a feature story on the new styles of garage doors hitting the market. For those of us who are managing the GarageWowNow campaign, this story and headline represented a huge success.

We had pitched that story idea, and the Blade’s editors saw its appeal with their readers. They then wrote their own 1,600-word article, crafted their own headline (“Open to Change”), and even designed an attractive illustration of three carriage-style doors.

The Blade’s story promoted our campaign’s key messages:

- “Old carriage houses inspire latest trend in garage doors” was the title of the story.
- The first sentence read: “Faster than you can say ‘Open, Sesame!,’ a new garage door can whisk your home’s curb appeal from staid — or, face it, shabby — to snazzy.”
- “Today’s carriage house-style garage doors combine vintage charm with modern construction and convenience” was a key statement early in the story.

Now, the Bad News

After that, the story took an ugly turn. The writer then quoted several local door dealers about the new styles of garage doors. But look at what they said.

- Dealer #1: “They’re absolutely gorgeous, **but they can be very pricey.**”
- Dealer #2: “People are interested in (the carriage door) because it’s different, **but ... it won’t work with a contemporary home.**”
- Dealer #3 talked about the “two types of insulating mediums,” polystyrene and polyurethane.

The story then digressed into the popularity of steel raised-panel doors, 24 vs.

26 gauge, thermal breaks, windows vs. no windows, R-values, and torsion vs. extension springs.

Golden Opportunity Lost

Here’s my problem. The Blade was pumped and primed to promote the dazzling new styles of garage doors, and *to do it all for free*. Then, local dealers, *stuck in a sales pitch from the 1980s*, scuttled the industry’s hottest new way to upsell. They reverted to the same old ‘recorded’ sales message they’ve been ‘playing back’ since the 1980s.

Since 2007, the national GarageWowNow campaign sought to get homeowners to think differently about garage doors and to upgrade to attractive steel, aluminum, fiberglass, or wood models. We believe that our industry finally has a good shot at getting homeowners to *view the garage door as a fashion item that enhances the home and not just a commodity to be bought at the lowest price.*

DASMA and IDA get it. Editors of hundreds of magazines and newspapers get it. Even homeowners get it. Sadly, though, some dealers didn’t get it.

However, starting with your 2012 advertising, you can begin to change your approach to selling our industry’s primary product. If you do, the result can be a more profitable business and more satisfied customers.

Four Lessons From GarageWowNow

GarageWowNow developed a bounty of great advertising messages that resonate with America. Using a national public relations agency, GWN crafted press releases and feature stories that incorporated these strategic messages. The releases

and stories were then fed to hundreds of the nation’s top editors of major newspapers and magazines.

Editors typically kill these pitched stories. But if a story is compelling and appealing, the editor will either publish the story as is or revise it.

GarageWowNow stories were remarkably successful at surviving the editor’s gauntlet. *The stories that made it into print contain the messages that are advertising gold for garage door dealers.*



Messages That Work, #1: Curb Appeal

Curb appeal. Today, those two words provide instant clarity and punch for a door dealer who is trying to advertise that a garage door is the best way to improve the appearance of a home.

The concept of curb appeal has been brought to the fore by two stark realities.

- (1) Millions of homes in North America have front-facing garages.
- (2) The garage doors

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take up a major portion of the fronts of these homes.

In today's economic climate, two other stark realities are working to increase the power and impact of a garage door on a home's curb appeal. (1) Home sales have plummeted far below traditional norms. (2) Homeowners, stuck in their existing homes, are doing more to improve the appearance of their homes or are searching for quick and inexpensive ways to increase the "saleability" of their homes.

Thus, curb appeal wields more power than in previous decades, and good-looking garage doors are indisputably the quickest, easiest, and least expensive way to punch up a home's curb appeal.

Newspapers Get It

Editors who received the GarageWowNow press releases saw this point quickly. The first sentence of the Toledo Blade story is a good example. It instantly recognized the connection between garage doors and curb appeal. And it quickly delivered the idea that a new garage door is a faster way to get it done.

Toledo wasn't alone. On Jan. 2, 2011, the Deseret Morning News of Salt Lake City, Utah, ran this headline on a feature story: "Need instant curb appeal? Replace your garage door!"



That headline would be a powerful headline for your next newspaper, magazine, or television advertisement. It will even pack a major punch on radio, a billboard, your website, or even on your next order of 1,000 door hangers.

"Curb Appeal Starts Here"

Consider the big headline that the Chicago Tribune used on March 27, 2009. "Curb appeal starts here" shouted the headline, next to six full-color photos of the latest garage door styles.

Its subhead was equally potent: "Be the envy of your neighbors with a stylish garage door." Your ad could use the same basic message and a stunning image of a "stylish garage door" to quickly drive your point to the center of the brain of every potential customer.

Don't be like the dealer who said,

"They're absolutely gorgeous, but they can be very pricey." Say this instead: "They're absolutely gorgeous, and we have dozens of styles that are very affordable."

Messages That Work, #2: Fashion Statement

On April 27, 2008, the Kansas City Star ran a huge story in full color with several large images of the latest garage doors. The headline was, "Fashion Forward Garages." The subhead read, "The right look can attract carloads of drive-by admirers."

The story was so large, it spilled over to a second page that ran this headline: "Garages opening up to a more fashionable look."

Fashion. Every consumer understands its appeal and value. People want the latest fashion when they buy a new pair of shoes, a new coat, a new couch, or a new car. Many are eager to spend more to get the latest fashion. And garage doors are no different.

Fashion — a major key to profitable sales — is finally fully available to your door business. Your garage door supplier, whomever it is, already has a wide range of fashionable new styles in stock and waiting for your order.

Glamour. Vogue. Chic.

"Glam goes the garage" was the giant title on a feature story in the Dallas Morning News on April 11, 2008. This full-page story, touting the glamour of today's newest garage doors, included five large full-color photos of stunning doors in steel, fiberglass, aluminum, and wood. I hope that every Dallas-area dealer bought up stacks of that April 11 issue and used that story as a sales tool.

Are your ads selling fashion? Or are you still selling price? Are your salespeople trained to sell fashion? Or are they still selling a boring 1980s-style steel raised-panel door?

Messages That Work, #3: The New Front Door

For decades, door dealers drooled with jealousy over the high prices commanded by front entry doors. The garage door is made of the same basic materials as the entry door and is five to six times larger. Yet our prices were shockingly low.

Real estate salespeople commonly told homeowners that the front door was the all-important first impression that helped to sell a home. Thus, the value of that product increased significantly as homeowners became accustomed to paying more for an entry door.

The World Has Changed

But the world has changed dramatically. With changing home-life patterns, changing home designs, and the new styles of garage doors, GarageWowNow saw a rare opportunity to kick the entry door out of its kingly position and crown the garage door as "The New Front Door." We even used that phrase as the tagline with the GarageWowNow logo.

For many homes today, the front entry door is visually insignificant. As I write this, I'm looking at my neighbor's beautiful home, built in 1995. As is now common, the front entry door is tucked away in the shadows under a canopy, while their big beige two-car garage door clearly dominates the entire front of the home.

Surveys reveal that more homeowners now use the garage door as the main entry point of the home. Many

rarely use their front door. The key to the house is the GDO remote control.

First Impressions Last

The point: The front entry door no longer deserves to be a home's "first impression." The garage door wins that race by a country mile.

GarageWowNow learned that editors quickly recognized this new reality of the American home. As the subhead of that 2008 Dallas Morning News story read, "A variety of styles makes it easy to enhance your home's first impression." (The "first impression" was obviously *not* the entry door.)

The spring 2009 issue of Beautiful Homes magazine featured a multi-page story titled "Best Front Forward" with this subhead: "With modern garages occupying so much territory, doors make a big impact." This title and subhead were splashed over a full-page image of a three-car garage with striking carriage house doors.

The story begins by citing garages' growing sizes and then adds, "Too often, though, they are built with forgettable doors. What a shame." I must ask: Are you the door

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Simple Math

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* IntelliG™ offers Limited Lifetime warranty on motor & integrated gearbox while TriloG™ offers Limited Lifetime warranty on motor and direct drive screw. See manual for details.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT OUR WEBSITE: WWW.GENIECOMPANY.COM

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dealer who sold that forgettable door?

Make "The New Front Door" one of your key advertising messages for 2012. Put that bold headline over a photo of one of your recent beautiful doors. People will quickly get your point.

Messages That Work, #4: ROI

In November 2010, for the first time, Remodeling magazine included a garage door replacement as one of the 34 basic home projects included in its annual "Cost vs. Value" study. More importantly, a midrange garage door replacement ranked #2 as generating the best return on investment (ROI) of all projects studied, while an upscale garage door ranked #4.

In the November 2011 study, the two switched places. The upscale garage door now ranks #2, while the midrange garage door finished as #4 out of the 33 projects in the 2011 study.



"(Garage doors) are among the least expensive projects in the survey," said Sal Alfano, Remodeling magazine's editorial director, "and they improve curb appeal in a way that can affect a potential buyer's first impression and, consequently, a home's resale value."

This is powerful ammunition for your arsenal of advertising messages for 2012. GarageWowNow used this message in 2011 and found many editors eager to jump at the news.

It Pays for Itself!

On Jan. 24, 2011, the Honolulu Star Advertiser wrote, "In Hawaii a new garage door costs a bit more than \$1,500 to install and adds an estimated \$2,769 to the value of your home, a bump of a whopping 180.8 percent." (The garage door ROI in Honolulu was better than any other city in the study.)

On Dec. 21, 2010, New York Newsday reported, "If you want the most bang for your buck on home improvements when you resell, stick to exterior projects. Those are the upgrades that have curb appeal — the first thing a potential buyer notices when looking at your house."

Many of our industry's manufacturers are jumping on this industry-changing news and translating it into effective ads. In 2011, Wayne-Dalton created a powerful ad with this headline: "So cost effective it practically pays for itself." The ad featured a large photo of a stunning fiberglass garage door and cited the Cost vs. Value Report by Remodeling magazine.

The ROI advertising message will resonate with consumers who are savvy about buying items that retain their value. The ROI message can help you upsell a customer from a basic garage door to an upscale door.

The Right Medium for the Right Message

Here's one final note about selecting the right media to carry your message. Since most of our four advertising messages for 2012 focus on the visual appeal of the new styles of garage doors, it's wise to *choose advertising media that maximize visuals*. Full-color images of dazzling garage doors look best on quality paper, on a television screen, billboards, direct mail pieces, or on a website.

Newspapers and Yellow Pages can print color photos of garage doors, but they don't look great on their paper. Radio can create stunning images in "the theatre of the mind," but if you have good visual media choices in your market, stick with those.

A Change for the Better

Is your advertising approach still stuck in a price-conscious mindset that views the garage door as a cheap way to cover the big hole in the front of the garage? If you retain that mindset, you will continue to live in a dog-eat-dog world of low prices, low margins, and low profitability.

Once you've changed your approach and changed your messages, you'll start experiencing more pride in your job, more customers who are thrilled with their purchases, and more profit for all your hard work. ■

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