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Marketing Strategy & the Fisherman's Dilemma

If you're a fisherman, you've probably been asked, "Catch any?" before. If the answer was "yes," how often was the next question, "How big?" Someone once wrote that "the true fisherman does not concern himself with counting." Now that's performing at a high level! As contractors and businesspeople, however, we certainly concern ourselves with counting, especially when it comes to sales. Number, type, and size of sales, total sales, average sales, etc. So what does all this counting and measuring get us in terms of useful information? A baseline for a marketing strategy.

Lunch with a colleague recently shed some light on developing and implementing such a marketing strategy. Adrienne Zoble (www.azobleassoc.com) is a national marketing speaker and consultant who lives in Fort Collins. Part of her niche clientele includes small to medium size building contractors around the country. We were discussing a particular client from Pennsylvania who specializes in remodeling. It seems they had a big 2010 and are looking to grow in 2011. At 21 employees we know they are "catching some," and it sounds like good fishing. So how are they doing it?

The answer, or at least part of it, involves the current real estate construction market and how to navigate it. A fisherman friend suggested, "The construction market from 1995-2005 was like an enormous school of feeding fish. If projects and work were fish, there were fish everywhere. All you had to do was throw in your line. You could catch your limit on a regular basis." "Now," he said, "we learned that the feeding frenzy happened because some people dumped a lot of 'chum' in the water. So the big schools are gone, and maybe all fished out for the foreseeable future. What's left are fewer fish [read 'projects']. To thrive, you've got to show you know how to fish, and those who can are the lifeblood of the organization." Things were starting to sound a little...you know.

It has been said that fishing is not a sport, it's a pursuit. A pursuit implies strategy, without which is just



random searching. The same can be said for contracting. A lot of contractors and other business people continue to hope that the big schools of fish come back soon. But hope is not a strategy. The contractor from Pennsylvania continues to do what any good fisherman does. Being prepared, keeping up on the latest trends and conditions, and most importantly getting out there and putting "time on the water" are the fundamentals for learning how your market behaves. "When the fishing gets tough and the weather is challenging you really only have two choices," says my fisherman friend, "fish or go home."

If you need help with marketing or other business operations issues, please contact the National Center for Craftsmanship (www.nccraftsmanship.org). A 501c3 educational non-profit, NCC is dedicated to helping you and your business thrive. Good fishing!

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Sutherlands

LUMBER & DESIGN GALLERY

Market Watch



RAIN OR SHINE!

April 2011

PARKING LOT SALE

at Sutherlands Lumber & Design Gallery!

Thursday & Friday, April 28th & 29th, 9am - 4pm

Saturday, April 30th, 10am - 3pm

- **Trex decking**
- **Siding**
- **Doors & Windows**
- **Tile & Hardwood**
- **Hardware**

**SAT. APR. 30TH
STOP BY TO ENJOY
SOME TASTY HOT
DOGS!**



**COME EARLY
FOR THE BEST
SELECTION!**

- **Beams**
- **Misc. Lumber**
- **Plumbing Fixtures**
- **AND MORE!**

This is our first ever non-stock stock sale! We have a great variety of unsold orders and odds and ends at super low prices. No reasonable offer refused! Inventory items include: Douglas Fir beams, lumber, siding, Simpson items, windows, various tile, interior and exterior doors and hardware.

SEE YOU IN THE PARKING LOT!