

Direct Marketing Strategies for Sales in a Social Media Age

Wednesday, April 27 2011



TJ McCue

James Young is an advocate for change. At 38, he is reinventing a company you wouldn't consider a change agent: Plainfield, Ill.-based Spring-Green Lawn Care. Young is creating fresh systems and programs to acquire new customers.

One of Young's greatest accomplishments at Spring-Green, however, was his collaboration with CEO Tom Hofer on the creation of a direct mail program and technology platform. These ground-breaking additions transformed the company by collecting all data into one environment,

therefore, providing tremendous marketing and business intelligence.

Specifically using Internet marketing and a centralized database, Spring-Green has created tools that allow them to make better decisions while evaluating the performance of individual franchisees. Overall, revenue per customer is up 22 percent and overall revenue 70.9 percent since Young came to the company in 2004. Moreover, the company generated approximately 6,000 web leads last year, and the direct mail program has been a success with 90 percent of Spring-Green's franchisees opting into it.

What I want to highlight here is -- 6,000 web leads may not seem like many. That's only 500 per month. But the point is -- they are more qualified leads and given that -- this is huge. How many leads do you need? Depending on your business and product, you don't need millions or hundreds of thousands. You need the ones who want to buy and I'm impressed with what Spring-Green is doing.

Their [main website](#) is brilliant, too. Short, mostly above the fold, and quick to point you to their discount search form. It ties you into their direct mail program by asking you to enter your Neighborhood Discount Number. And if you don't have one of those, they make it super easy to receive a quote.

Young shared that "Pay per click advertising, search engine optimization and social media have all played significant roles in the transformation of Spring-Green, but collecting quantitative data and performing comparison analysis has also been important."

It's catapulted us to a new level, and we're no longer playing catch-up. We're now able to relay a great amount of information back to our franchisees that helps shape their individual business models. And we will only continue to refine these tools, which will keep our business on top throughout the next decade.

As a side note, to offset the recession, Young and the Spring-Green team have also created new franchisee business models to attract various demographics. Most recently, they've implemented the Executive Owner Model, which awards two franchise territories for a higher initial investment fee while offering a larger margin for profitability. You can find details about their [lawn care business](#) here.

I'm always interested to hear about what many of us would consider traditional service businesses and how they are incorporating social media, internet sales technology, and other web-based apps to drive new sales and engage at a deeper level with customers and prospects. You can visit [TechBizTalk](#) if you have an interesting app or story.