

Loose Screws

August 12, 2009

Upcoming Ohio Valley NARI Events

CKBR Certification Class to Begin September 9, 2009. Miami Valley NARI is offering the Certified Kitchen and Bath Remodeler course beginning this September 9, 2009. The classes will be held every Wednesday from 6:00pm-9:00pm at the Miami Valley NARI offices, 136 South Keowee Street, Dayton. They will conclude November 11, 2009 and the test will be conducted Saturday, November 14, 2009. The classes are being discounted this year until November 1, 2009 and are being offered to both Chapter's members and friends. This is a great time to take advantage of the financial savings and achieve this highly desirable Certification. Please call 937.222.NARI for details or click [here](#) for application. There is limited space available so RSVP Today!

Notice:

Building Value is currently in search of scaffolding material that can be utilized as lumber racks. Building Value LLC is a nonprofit building materials re-use enterprise that salvages quality building materials otherwise destined for the landfill and resells them in a public retail center. The enterprise provides on-the-job training opportunities in construction and retail, two of Ohio's highest growth sectors. Please contact Scott Beard at 513.475.6783, or sbeard@buildingvalue-cincy.org.

Save the Date: October 8, 2009 will be the date for Ohio Valley NARI's **Feature Vendor Night!** Meet suppliers of building supplies and services. Enjoy a Deli Buffet Dinner, Free Beer and Sodas, Cookies and Door Prizes. The cost is just \$25.00 for NARI members and you can bring your whole crew! That's right, one cost of \$25.00 and your entire crew can attend! The event will begin at 6:30pm and should "wrap-up" around 9:00pm. The location is the Holiday Inn on Hauck Road. RSVP today by calling 1.800.498.6274. Please click [here](#) for registration form. **Vendors Tables** are still available! Click [here](#) for Vendor Table Application or call 1.800.498.6274 for details.

The Ohio Valley 2009-2010 CRG

The deadline has been extended to August 14, 2009 at 5:00pm! We are finalizing all changes and updates to the upcoming Consumer's Remodeling Guide. Be sure to get your profile updates and advertising requests in as soon as possible. **Don't miss out** on this year's **advertising opportunities!** Call 1.800.498.NARI for more information.

BBB Says Be Wary of Companies Offering Financial Assistance

Many local companies are desperate for ways to get new business. Seminars offering to help increase their bottom-lines are tempting, but your Better Business Bureau is issuing an alert to warn you to be cautious when agreeing to attend seminars offering these services. In most cases, the presenters will use high-pressure sales pitches to promote products and services that

OneDayton marketing company, that's registered as a government vendor, recently received several e-mails about two free seminars at the Crowne Plaza Hotel put on by B2G Group, Inc., a company that would supposedly train businesses on how to gain federal contracts. The e-mails were followed up by four free tickets in the mail.

The president of the local marketing company attended one of the seminars in July, which was a full house, knowing there would be a high pressure sales effort. And, she was right. The presenters were selling a three-day training course, which normally sold for \$4,995. But, if attendees signed up on the spot, they would get a group discount of \$2,000. Many of her fellow attendees signed up at the end of the seminar for the company's services without checking the company out. Fortunately, she left the seminar without handing over any cash only to learn from your BBB Web site the company had an F rating with your BBB in Orlando, FL.

Since attending the seminar, the local marketing company president has been called twice by a B2G Group salesman. The second time he called, she told him she knew his BBB rating and there was no way she would do business with a company that had an F rating. She hasn't heard from him since.

Remember to check out vendors before doing business with them. And, you can Start with Trust by contacting your BBB at www.bbb.org or by calling 937.222.1534 ext. 2270.

Create a Remodeling Walking Tour

by Morgan Zenner

More than 50 percent of Charlie Allen's business comes from referrals. In fact, Allen, owner of Charlie Allen Restorations in Cambridge, Mass., goes through a lot of effort to keep it that way.

"Referrals are a highly qualified prospect that I prefer because if someone contacts you through a referral, you're much more likely to do the work," Allen says.

It's not always easy to get referrals, and Allen has developed a few strategies to accomplish this in an interesting way that customers enjoy.

Walking Tours

With the help of a public relations consultant, Allen hosted a walking tour. The all-day event was an open invitation event that consisted of walking through four houses located in the same neighborhood. For Allen, it was the perfect opportunity to showcase his latest work to clients.

"The walking tour was a tremendous opportunity to position my company to clients," Allen says. "It showed them that I was the neighborhood contractor and that my work ranged from high-end to modest projects that were accessible to everyone. It also allowed new clients to talk to my previous clients in an unscripted manner as they walked through their homes."

Not to mention the personal interaction between clients and staff. Clients got to know Allen and his staff throughout the tour and developed a high level of familiarity with them.

There was a good amount of preparation for the tour. First, former clients were contacted and asked to participate. Also, Allen's public relations consultant helped him secure a quarter-page advertisement in a local newspaper and send an e-mail blast to his client database. Attendees

Allen also saw this as an opportunity to partner with other business owners in the community. At each house, a local professional gave a presentation that added greater value to attendees.

For example, one home had a Realtor talk about renovations that add the most value to a home. At another, a cleaning company gave a presentation about the health benefits of using green cleaning products, and a gardener showcased his expertise in landscaping.

The program attracted about 60 people.

"We definitely think it was an effective marketing event in that it probably impacted a lot more than 60 people," Allen says.

The return on investment extends to more than 60 people because of word of mouth marketing - those 60 people will tell their friends and families about Allen's company, which keeps his business top of mind when those people decide to remodel.

Allen also gained clients through the vendors he invited to present, especially the Realtor, who recommended him to her clients who were looking to fix up new houses.

Slowly but surely, Allen is convinced his planning and effort paid off. "It took a lot of time and effort to put this thing together and organize it. Some of the clients needed more convincing than others to participate in the walking tour."

To ease their worries, Allen provided complimentary cleaning service after the tour and honored their special requests. "One client, who received an exterior renovation, preferred that everyone stayed outside and another preferred guests take their shoes off," Allen says, "and for the most part, we were able to accommodate their requests."

House Parties

Another, related, referral driver are the house parties Allen occasionally hosts after renovations, in which he invites interested clients and neighbors to view homes once they are finished. This is a less focused approach that is easier to plan and organize.

One young couple moved into a newly renovated condo and saw the open house party as an opportunity to get the place fixed up and introduce themselves to their neighbors.

"We distributed flyers in mailboxes and lobbies inviting people to the party," Allen says. "That day, we catered the whole party and set up a little display with our portfolio. Once again, we provided a cleaning service the next day."

The success of these events comes from the fun, party-like atmosphere, which reduces the pressure on prospective clients. "It's easy for you not to be engaged if you don't want to be," Allen says. "People ask me questions in a very informal way and think about our conversation and may call me weeks later to set up an appointment."

Allen warns that both of these marketing and public relations initiatives can be very slow process and often requires patience to truly see results.

relations consultant to get publicity. And he is convinced that unpaid media, such as news stories, lends more credibility to clients than paid advertisements.

For example, he was quoted as a renovation expert in a Boston Globe article and he sends his client database a quarterly e-newsletter that features articles that are informational rather than self-promoting.

Allen says, "It takes a certain kind of hope and confidence for this white-knuckle approach, but I believe in its power."

He says even though he has a limited marketing budget, he purposely hired a professional to provide that "significant boost of energy" to marketing efforts that otherwise may not be a high priority with his in-house staff. Hiring the consultant is worth every penny in Allen's mind.

"We always ask clients, how did you hear about us? And many of them cannot recall exactly where they saw our name but say that they just saw us around," he says. "That's how we know it's working."

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