

RESET YOUR MARKETING IN THE NEW YEAR

By **Bill Smith**



Don't you hate New Year's resolution articles? Now that the calendar has changed over, experts are climbing over each other to offer top 10 lists about how to run your organization better, blogs are full of pithy entries with Father Time references, and social media outlets are crammed with links to 2015 forecasts. You need a break, don't you?

I've got bad news: You've come to the wrong place. The truth is that when it comes to marketing, the new year presents the perfect opportunity to evaluate and refresh your marketing efforts. It's not just a good idea—it's essential. Your competition has probably already hit the reset button and begun ramping up their marketing.

Why is this the time for a marketing reset? Because the industry is on the move again. The parking industry is more entrepreneurial than ever, with equipment and technology providers introducing a steady stream of new tools that are redefining how we park and how facilities are managed. Development is taking place across the U.S., and parking designers and planners are in high demand. And owners and operators find themselves locked in stiff competition for parkers' business. For forward-thinking organizations that have a handle on their marketing, these are exciting times. But those who don't keep up will be left in the dust.

Here are three New Year's resolutions to help your organization meet the challenge.



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Rethink Your Brand

Your brand isn't just about what you do or what you've done in the past. It's about who you are and why you do what you do. If you are a designer or planner, you don't just design facilities or create parking plans; you transform communities, promote local business development, or make operators' properties more desirable to tenants and other customers. If you are a technology or equipment provider, you don't just design and market equipment; you change the way people park and make it more convenient, comfortable, safer, profitable, or manageable. If you're an owner or operator, you don't just provide a place to park; you offer a valuable, safe, and convenient service.

The first step in your marketing reset is to rethink what your organization does and what it represents—

what sets you apart—and make your people think in these terms. Then start communicating what makes you indispensable to customers. Don't be afraid to seek out a brand transformation firm that can help you identify and articulate what makes your organization special.

In with the New

The 21st century is all about new media, right? Not exactly. Traditional media still offer extraordinary reach. Look for opportunities in industry, business, and general media to publicize your products and services to customers and prospects. As you introduce new products or look to establish your organization as a leader and your people as authorities, publicity is still the best and most cost-effective ways to reach huge numbers of people.

Your website is another 20th century technology that's essential to marketing. Does your online identity reflect your newly updated brand? If not, it's time to update the site.

Getting Social

Many organizations have been slow to jump on the social media bandwagon. If you haven't yet, now is the time. Create a social media strategy through which you are informing the marketplace about what's going on with your organization and its products and services. Be sure to coordinate your social media campaign with your web marketing and publicity efforts.

Most importantly, make sure that all of the elements of your revamped marketing effort are coordinated. Messages should be consistent and the different elements—website, publicity, social media—need to present synchronized messages across all platforms.

Sure, it's a cliché, but the new year brings new opportunities. Now is the time to reset your marketing if you want to keep up with your competition. **P**