

FOR THE ELITE OF THE DRYCLEANING INDUSTRY

Reference Price Advertising

“Staying ahead
of the competition”



BY
DENNIS MCCRORY

A reference price advertisement is one in which a lower, current price is compared with a higher price, either previously offered or offered by someone else. Previous research has confirmed that when reference and special-offering prices are presented together, they are compared, and this comparison has a favorable effect on

consumer deal perceptions relative to a situation in which reference prices are not presented.

The Effect of Limited-Time Availability

With limited-time appeals in advertising, consumers are informed that they have a limited amount of time (e.g., “One week only!”) to act on an offering. Limited-time availability implies value because people have learned over the course of their lives to associate limited-time events with scarcity and price deals. The evidence that exists suggests that limiting a consumer’s opportunity to obtain a service makes the service more attractive and affects value perceptions.

Times Change

As consumer shopping behavior changes, we need to change the way we advertise to them. Almost everyone understands that advertising that was effective in the 1950s will not necessarily be effective today. And for that reason two Professors of Marketing, from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, did extensive research into reference pricing as it relates to current advertising practices and shopping behavior.

They analyzed 13,594 newspaper retail advertisements and found that it is uncommon for reference pricing to be used alone in advertisements: 87.2% of the advertisements that had reference pricing also included limited-time availability (i.e. “One week only!”) or sale announcements in the headline or copy. Using dual-process theories of persuasion as a conceptual framework, the researchers conducted three field experiments that compared the conditions under which the use of limited-time availability and sale announcements in advertisements that featured reference prices affected consumer

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price perceptions and store shopping intentions.

Regularly: \$5.99; Now: \$3.59
Sale! One Week Only

Most of us have used variations of one or both of these headlines in our advertising. The top headline features reference pricing, in which a current lower price is compared with a former, higher price. The bottom headline features scarcity – specifically, the limited-time availability of the sale offer. The exact wording and arrangement of each headline represents information and value cues that are intended to favorably influence customer price perceptions. The question then becomes: does this information achieve its intended effect, and is there a difference in the effect when customers are or are not “in the market” for your services? Also, does the use of multiple value cues improve or have no effect on price perceptions? Their research explored these questions and examined why and when commonly used limited-time availability and sale announcements affect customers attitudes about your prices and intentions of shopping at stores whose advertising used reference pricing.

The thirteen-thousand-plus advertisements examined, were from four major U.S. newspapers (The Chicago Tribune, The Dallas Morning News, Los Angeles Times, and The New York Times), over a six-month period.

Their research examined the possibility that reference pricing and limited-time availability, have inherent differences in their information-processing requirements, and thus customers who are actively

shopping versus those who are not actively shopping for the services featured in an advertisement respond to them differently. In particular, the full value implications contained in reference price information requires more thought and effort and, thus, greater involvement than a limited-time sales cue.

Dual-Process Theory of Persuasion

Using the dual-process theory of persuasion, the researchers were able to determine when this technique resulted in more favorable price attitudes and store shopping intentions. When consumers were not actively shopping for a particular service, a limited-time price reduction or a sale announcement affects price perceptions and shopping intentions, but the size of the reduction, represented by reference prices, does not. When consumers are actively shopping for a service, both reference prices and limited-time offerings favorably affect price perceptions and shopping intentions.

The reference price results can be understood by recognizing that comprehension of the value implications of those prices requires a level of processing effort that exceeds the level that people typically expend when viewing advertisements for services that they do not have an immediate need for.

When used by itself, reference price advertising results in favorable price perceptions and store shopping intentions only among consumers who are shopping for a particular service. Reference pricing is an effective persuasion strategy among consumers who are of the greatest interest to drycleaners, namely, those with an immediate need for their services. Consumers who lack an immediate

“...sale announcements, in reference price advertising appear to have no drawbacks”

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Attracting Future, Past and Present Customers



BY ED ROTH

Times are tough. Business difficult. So, what are you going to do about it? That old saying, "You can't control the wind, but you can adjust your sails" has never been more true. It looks as if it will be a long

time until things are turned around. When people have a tough time paying their mortgage, food bill, and filling their car with gasoline, it only seems logical that dry cleaning will not be their first priority. Instead of cleaning a suit after two wearings they might wait until three. Instead of dry cleaning that pair of Dockers they might throw it into the washing machine this time. If it comes out great, they might never dry clean it again. There are a lot of ways of reducing their dry cleaning bill, but not too many ways of reducing their gasoline bill, food bill, or mortgage. You need a plan to get through these times. You need a plan for your business. So let's get going.

In times like this I feel it is extremely important to make sure we have the basics covered. There are many nice ideas we've discussed in these newsletters: flowers, gifts, popcorn machines, coffee machines, chocolate chip cookies, apples at the counter, promotions, signs, flags, and all kinds of things to spruce up your business. We shouldn't eliminate these ideas. In fact they can be used very effectively now in distancing yourself from the competition, but for this article I want to focus on the basic elements that we sometimes forget and I feel are vital for keeping your business profitable.

There are three kinds of customers: your current customers, those who have left, and those who are prospects. We can view them as your present, past, and future customers.

Future customers:

You must have a plan to reach prospects. This is one of the key ways of building your business - adding new clients. Direct mail is the most cost efficient way of reaching prospective customers. By merging and purging the names on the lists that you send, you can send a piece of mail to someone who has never been to your store. You can even pick parameters like household income, hobbies, profession and almost any variable you can imagine. The new technology allows people designing lists to hand pick what you think is your best bet for a new prospect. Work on the lists, using special parameters to cherry pick where and when and who you want to send a piece of direct mail to. In this month's profile, Anthony Del Gaizo believes that one of the basic reasons for his business success is his non stop direct mail pieces that keep going and going and going like the Eveready bunny. It seems that the simplest "20% off" does as well as a "25%" or "30% off" and

(Continued page 4)

Members Only

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USER NAME: "golombmember"
PASSWORD: "iamawinner"

We'll be changing these from time to time, so keep posted!

much better than the more complicated “2 for 1”. or “20% for five or more garments.” A simple nice ad, with a simple nice offer seems to be the best bet. There is no need to tell the life story of your business to fill the ad space. Make it simple. A simple nice ad with an oversized card seems to get the best response. The oversized card gets noticed because it stands out from the pack. Again, keep it simple and make it smart. Keep remembering that less is more. Remember the Nike swoosh? That’s all there is on Tiger’s hat and that’s all that’s needed. Get a nice smart logo, that represents your store, and stick with it.

Another way of reaching out to get new customers is neighborhood newsletters. In my dry cleaning groups, that meet each month to discuss the progress of our businesses, we have come to the conclusion that the front or back cover of these publications is by far the best bang for your buck. The members who have switched to the cover have shown an increase in sales, and a dramatic increase in the response to their ads. They are very vocal and strong headed about this piece of advice. They say, “Don’t waste your money in the middle of the newsletter. They say, “Take the cover for all to see. Make it simple. Less is more. A straight per cent off seems to be the best”.

As for Yellow Pages, many people think it’s wasted money, many don’t. Anthony Del Gaizo likes to throw as many advertising dollars as he can, in as many diversified ways as possible to reach prospects. He likes his Yellow Pages ad and he relates in this month’s profile how he continually gets new customers through it. Read his profile to find exactly what he does. It’s interesting and informative and will help you develop your plan.

Lost Customers:

You will never get back all of your lost customers.

Some move away, some die, and some leave for personal reasons that cannot be overcome with any offer or apology. However, if you have a plan, you will be able to retrieve some very important customers. The first rule is that you must find out who is missing in a timely fashion. Run the customer list every month on the first day of the month and notice if anyone is missing. If you wait too long the customer will have already established a relationship with the new dry cleaner and in today’s business market a “relationship” with a client is of utmost importance. No matter what you offer or say, if they have tried a new cleaner three or four times before they hear from you, your chances of getting them back are greatly diminished. So you must determine who has left as soon as you can. To contact them, I use a simple post card with some humor built in, and an offer for coming back. My card shows me with a hanky drying my eyes and saying how I’m so sad that you left. It offers “\$25 free” to return, no questions asked. I find the cards easy to mail and they are easy to see (no opening up of envelopes). They are simple and to the point. On special customers, I will either make a phone call or have the CSR, who knows the customer best, make the call. The

**“...if you have a
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(lost)
customers”**

trick is to make this a system and do it every month and have it working for you like clockwork. The first of the month comes, the list is generated, and the cards are mailed. If you make it a system, it will get done. If you buy the cards and put them on the shelf and do not have a system that mails them every month, then it will not get done in a timely fashion and by the time you contact the lost customer he/she is already bonded to their new cleaner. Three of my top 10 customers are clients who had left at some

(Continued page 8)



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Anthony Del Gaizo

The Plaza Professional Dry Cleaners

Bound Brook, NJ

Anthony Del Gaizo loves his profession. "I've never gone on an interview for a job. For the last 21 years I've been doing what I love to do. I enjoy being the hunter and I love the pursuit of the new customer and the new account." Anthony's passion for his industry and his business seems to come out with each breath and with each explanation of his present and future goals. At age 23 Anthony entered the drycleaning industry. He now owns Plaza Cleaners in central New Jersey with his brother, Vincent.

As part of the NCA management/cost group we visited Anthony's plant several years ago. Anthony had 3 plants and 3 drop stores and was confused about how best to coordinate the entire operation and make it work more efficiently and profitably. To complicate the situation, Anthony also owns the CRDN franchise for restoration work in his area. It has taken Anthony some time to figure out exactly what he wanted to do and exactly how best to do it, but he finally has things ironed out. Through a major renovation of plants and equipment, the new Plaza Cleaners has one plant and five drop stores. Anthony has changed everything from the logo, to the slogan, to the machinery. My cost group was there when Anthony got his first Ipura machine, and I believe we

may have witnessed one of the first loads ever run. It seemed like some voodoo magic then, and there were many in the group, including myself, who did not believe that it would really work. Now, several years later, Anthony has three Ipuras and has changed over, totally, so the Ipuras are the only dry cleaning machines he has. He also has an Imesa wet cleaning machine and has installed all new tensioning equipment for the pressing side.

Anthony loves the Ipuras. "It's very efficient. The quality of the cleaning is terrific. There is no odor. There is no lint. It's environmentally friendly. We do a tremendous amount of cleaning and we run two shifts. When the pressers are finished I can shut down the boiler and we can still clean for another eight hours. It's like plugging in a lamp. The cost factor for running it is terrific, especially in these times when you're trying to cut costs. At first we did a tremendous amount of spotting. It seemed as though we were spotting all day long. Columbia came in and gave us an extensive spotting course with major training sessions. It cut our spotting time down in half. The best part is that the machine is operator proof. There is no way to short-cycle a load. There is no way to bypass the amount of cleaning time or drying time. The machine will

make you wait until the cycle is done and the clothes are clean with no odor. With perc there were always times that we had shoulder pads that smelled of perc or a lining in a jacket that caused odors and we had to dry the load again to give it extra time. I was constantly worrying because it was operator dependent. You can't advance this machine. There's no way to "cheat" the machine. It takes the operator out of the equation. Now if they could only do that for my shirt units, I'd be in Heaven. I've had petroleum, perc, and Ipura machines. The cleaning with the new Ipura is as good or better than the others. The spotting is easy and can be taught to anyone."

To build the business Anthony has come up with a formula that works for him. He goes after the smaller offices like doctors, lawyers, and the other professional groups in the many strip malls that dot his central New Jersey area. He attends the Chamber of Commerce trade show and has a booth displaying his pick up and delivery services. "I typically like an office with 15 people or less. I get about 5 of the office workers as customers and usually there is one really good client, while the rest supplement the stop on the route. With these smaller type offices there is no problem with someone taking home the

(Continued page 7)

wrong clothes. There is a lot of word of mouth where the professional people in one office will usually tell their friends who might work in an office down the street. The only draw back is that people will not bring their household cleaning (drapes and bedspreads) to work. I usually get their suit, shirts and blouses; the things they wear to work. You won't have an office employee bringing his 5 coats to work after the season." Anthony also has several routes of home delivery, which he is constantly expanding. To grow his business Anthony uses several kinds of advertising. The lion's share of his advertising dollars goes to direct mail. "I flood my branding advertising and then I reap the rewards. I have three zones and I alternate them each month. I just don't stop. I make sure I send to all three zones in May and June and November and December. I even use the Yellow Pages and get many calls from my ad for a route pick up. I'm very repetitive and very consistent and the results are great. I've also managed to convert many store customers to route customers and this has worked out great. Currently I'm working on my website to reach new prospects, too."

At the beginning of Anthony's conversion to one central plant, things did not work smoothly. "There are always glitches. That's why I recommend that anyone planning a conversion do it in the slow season. We changed everything in February.

If we had done it during the busy season it would have been crazy. By making the changes in February it gave us time to work out the kinks. When I realized I was in the trucking business, and needed to coordinate the incoming trucks and the incoming work, I was on the right track". Different colored mesh bags was the key ingredient in coordination for Anthony. Every store has a different color. Now everything is running smoothly and Anthony is very happy to see it work. One of the major reasons that the



work-flow and production works so well is that Anthony measures every operator's work through the use of the chip counter. He even weighs the bags entering the store on big hook scales to monitor the incoming work and smooth out the work week. "When you are hired and trained you are told that you won't get a raise until your piece-per-hour count is up to a certain point. Of course there are built-in problems, like the presser who got his count up to 36 pants per hour and then got his raise. After the raise his count went back to 24 an hour. He also brought his fellow presser who works next to

him down to 24 also. Because I keep a constant count, the difference was noticed right away. The presser was called aside and shown the problem. Once they know we are constantly watching and measuring, they realize they can't cheat the system. We've eliminated a lot of workers in the production area because we monitor their piece count. It's amazing how efficiently we are running now, compared to when we had the three plants." Recently, Anthony added a steam tunnel and it has effectively eliminated one full employee. He even keeps track of the work done by the tunnel and how many pieces need touch ups and how many can be passed on with no further finishing.

Another of Anthony's changes was the logo and the slogan. The new slogan is "We Care." He uses it in different areas in different ways. For instance, when a button is sewed on he puts a note that says "We Care, we sewed this button for you." "We Care about our environment and that's why our equipment is environmentally friendly." "We Care and use biodegradable poly bags." Anthony likes the flexibility of the new slogan.

It's refreshing to interview Anthony and see his excitement for his new plant and his enthusiasm for this industry. It emphasizes the things that can be done to bring a new look, new profitability, and a new attitude to your businesses. ♦

REFERENCE PRICE ADVERTISING (Continued from page 2)

need do not process the implications of reference prices in drycleaning advertisements to the degree necessary to grasp the value implications. However, drycleaners might still consider using reference pricing to appeal to a broader audience. The value in marketing to consumers without an immediate need for your services is in the likelihood of future, rather than immediate, sales being generated by associating the drycleaner with favorable pricing practices in the minds of consumers.

Reference pricing paired with limited-time availability results in more favorable price perceptions and store shopping intentions than the use of either technique alone among consumers who are shopping for a particular service. Insight regarding this point is shown by the finding that reference pricing and limited-time availability are used together in retail advertisements more fre-

quently than reference pricing is used alone. As a general statement, the joint use of reference pricing and limited-time appeals is advisable because the effects of the two techniques appear to compensate for each other under different conditions. Specifically, reference price effects are significant when consumers are shopping for a service.

Do Sales Work?

One important finding of this study was that sale announcements, in reference price advertisements, appear to have no drawbacks. The potential value of a sale being presented to disinterested consumers should not be underestimated, especially because it does not lower evaluations of consumers who are currently in the market. Sales actually have the potential to convert non-shoppers into shoppers. ♦

ATTRACTING FUTURE, PAST AND PRESENT CUSTOMERS (Continued from page 4)

point and a phone call or card brought them back.

Current Customers:

I recommend a simple post card to contact your current customers every other month. I offer them "20% off." It's a simple post card that says, "Thanks for being our customer" and offers "20% off" their next order. It's very important in today's atmosphere to make sure your current customers feel appreciated and "loved." I also emphasize the reading of the book "Hug Your Customer," which I wrote about in the last newsletter. I've already given it to my CSR's to read. It's a wonderful book that emphasizes the relationship of the client and the owner and the bonding of the business to the customer. If nothing else, it will remind you of the important aspects of keeping your customers happy, keeping them loyal and making sure that your business grows. You can also use this bi-monthly mailing to your present customers to remind them of special services like storage, pick up and delivery or special sales like household goods during springtime.

Stan Golomb told me, many years ago, that the way to make your business grow is to keep your current cus-

tomers and keep adding new ones. It's as true today as it was 30 years ago, when Stan spoke to me, when I joined the group. If you follow this simple advice and put systems in place to reach for new customers, keep your present ones happy, and try to retrieve the lost ones, you will be taking the right steps to grow your business. Get a big calendar and make sure that you place these systems on the calendar to make sure that it is done in a timely fashion. As they get done each month it will become more of a habit and part of your regular business system and you will watch your numbers grow.

It is as simple as A, B, C.

Attract New Customers

Be Good to Your Present Customers

Contact Lost Customers

(Note: What Ed is describing here is the original Stan's Plan for direct mail. If you are not familiar with exactly how this works, call the GG office 1.800.833.0560.) ♦

Ed Roth is the owner of U.N. Cleaners in Flushing, NY. He is an active member of the Golomb Group. If you have comments or questions about Ed's articles, please contact him by e-mail: edrothun@aol.com or tel:(718) 969-0207

Route Basics

BY JAMES PEUSTER



Ok, now is the time to get back to the basics and try NOT to reinvent the wheel. When something works, don't fix it. This is why many successful dry-cleaners do NOT have

routes that run on Wednesdays and Saturdays. If you do and consider yourself successful, then do not change. However, I am going to give you a few reasons why I believe Monday/Thursday and Tuesday/Friday are the very best days to have routes.

First of all, I believe that having Wednesdays off is beneficial for the entire company so that there can be a set day to have route meetings to go over operational, customer service, and marketing concerns. Some successful companies meet weekly with a set agenda so that it does not become a "complaint session" or a waste of time. I usually suggest at least one meeting every other week. This is an excellent way to direct your entire route crew and listen to their concerns. Be open to their needs without coddling their wants. Drivers need direction and to be held accountable for their work and a great way is to schedule one-on-ones on Wednesdays as well.

Another reason for not servicing on other days is for production purposes. You all know that no matter how strong your production is, Murphy's Law strikes all the time. With this in mind, many of you fall behind and struggle to get caught up. But by staying ahead and having a "buffer" day, this allows for touch-ups and usually assists in better quality, as well and being

able to focus on other "pressing" issues.

A third reason is to give a driver a day off during the week to take care of personal issues such as doctor appointments and other things that arise. A counter employee usually can ask for time off, with other available coverage, while a driver usually doesn't have a back-up or it is you, the owner. Also, a driver needs refreshing and this prevents many from experiencing burn-out. Many 6 days-a-week drivers not only complain more, but they also don't assist in the sales or other issues.

Another reason is to give your vehicle time off as well. Wednesday can be used for regular maintenance and other service issues for your vans. This is critical since many vans have gone too long since their last oil change or other servicing. Quite often, it is difficult to swap out a van or to fit a repair issue into the regular schedule of the route.

A final reason is that many have explained that once they moved a Wednesday/Saturday to the other options, the sales went up 20 to 25%.

This is because of the lack of usage on Saturday. Even though you would think more people would use it on the weekend, it is not always true. Some have had success, but not the majority.

Stick to the basics and usually you can keep it as simple as possible to allow time for marketing, maintenance and management. ♦

James Peuster is a nationally known author, speaker, trainer, and coach who specializes in route development through Marketing, Management and Maintenance training. James has costs groups specifically designed for route costs and growth and his website is www.theroutepro.com

Rules to Break & Laws to Follow

One hundred years ago, the financial planners at the Daimler-Benz company attempted to forecast the eventual size of the world market for cars. After careful analysis, they predicted that in another century there would be 1 million cars in use worldwide.

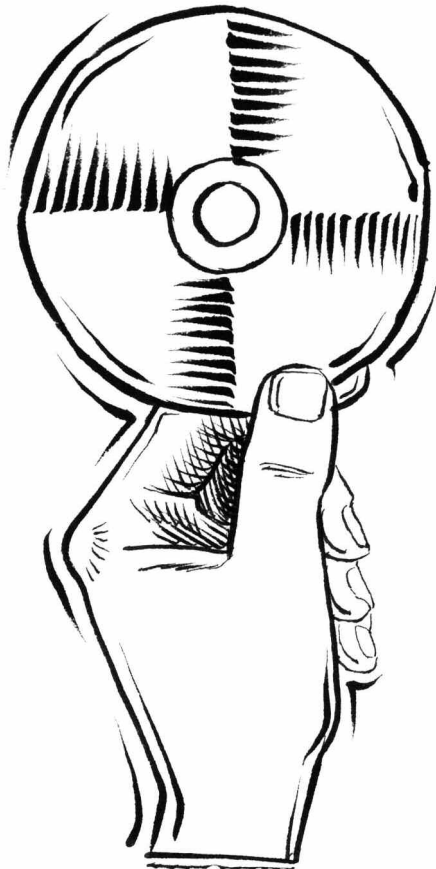
This forecast, was obviously inadequate, because by the year 2000, more than 600 million cars were in use around the world. Nearly 60 million new cars were manufactured in that year alone.

How could Daimler's finance people have missed the mark by so much? It wasn't the time lapse that created the error. Nor was it sloppy calculation. Their error was due to a completely false assumption.

The planners predicted that in a hundred years, the world population of chauffeurs would be about a million, and this would be a limitation on the growth of the horseless carriage industry. Their prediction about the world population of chauffeurs was actually very close to the mark, but their assumption that all cars would have to be driven by chauffeurs was dead wrong. The error was not in the accuracy of the measurement,

but in a false assumption about what should be measured.

Assumptions just like this one – just as carefully and accurately measured, and every bit as false – are every day corroding decisions about what truly limits the growth of businesses. Including yours.



Before the rise of the Internet, the certain rules served as reasonable guides for running a successful business. But a number of new technologies have introduced capabilities and influences on business that have created a "perfect storm" of radical change.

As Don Peppers and Martha Rogers explain in this summary of *Rules to Break & Laws to Follow: How Your Business Can Beat the Crisis of Short-Termism*, business has changed so radically that the old accepted wisdom just don't work anymore.

In this summary, you'll learn how to overcome the three unspoken assumptions about how businesses create value. Companies have followed these rules for more than a century, but they are false, and you'll learn why and how to break them. In their place, you'll learn the 12 Laws to Follow that will allow you to achieve success in both the current quarter and the long term. ♦

The Origin of Policies

By Don Desrosiers

I often observe procedures at drycleaning plants that are hard to explain beyond “that’s the way we do it here.” Some cling to policies that border on the absurd but still they cling to them with the thought that there must be some reason why. Nobody knows the reason. Let me explain how and why this happens.

Start with a cage containing five apes. In the cage, hang a banana on a string and put stairs under it. Before long, an ape will go to the stairs and start to climb towards the banana. As soon as he touches the stairs, spray all of the apes with cold water. After a while, another ape makes an attempt with the same result - all the apes are sprayed with cold water. This continues through several more attempts. Pretty soon, when another ape tries to climb the stairs, the other apes all try to prevent it.

Now, turn off the cold water. Remove one ape from the cage and replace it with a new one. The new ape sees the banana and wants to climb the stairs. To his horror, all of the other apes attack him. After another attempt and attack, he knows that if he tries to climb the stairs, he will be assaulted.

Next, remove another of the original five apes and replace it with a new one. The newcomer goes to the stairs and is attacked. The previous newcomer takes part in the punishment with enthusiasm. Again, replace a third original ape with a new one. The new one makes it to the stairs and is attacked as well. Two of the four apes that beat him have no idea why they were not permitted to climb the stairs, or why they are participating in the beating of the newest ape. After replacing the fourth and fifth original apes, all the apes, which have been sprayed with cold water, have been replaced. Nevertheless, no ape ever again approaches the stairs.

Why not?

"Because that's the way they've always done it, and that's the way it's always been around here." And that's how company policies begin....

“If you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you’ve always got.”

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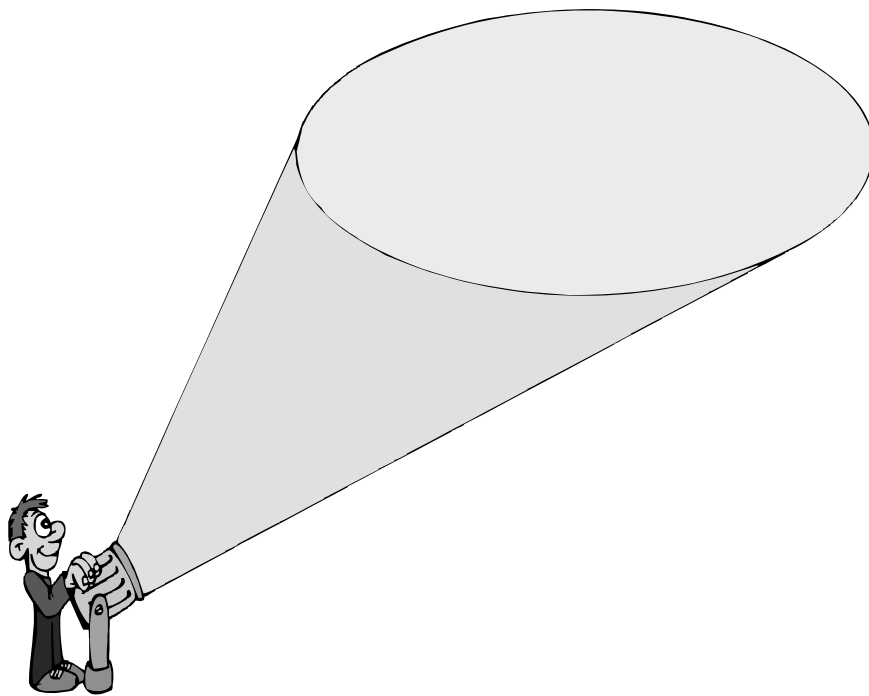
Turn On The Spotlight!

Focusing a delivery route on small offices, like Anthony Del Gaizo, this month's profile Member, is an idea that hasn't been lost on other Golomb Group Members.

Teresa Mosey, owner of Fabricare Cleaners in Bremerton, WA, has refined her marketing to similar offices by "Spotlighting" a different office each month.

Here's her process:

Every month a different business, on their existing pick-up and delivery route, is selected. Once a week they bring in enough coffee and donuts for everyone in the office, along with a generous supply of free express bags, other specialty items (i.e. lint rollers, ink pens, gold hangers, etc.) and sign-up forms.



The free coffee, donuts and specialty items, always attract a crowd and, naturally, the conversation soon turns to Fabricare Cleaners. Current customers in the office give impromptu testimonials as they consume all the free goodies.

The benefits of attracting new customers, at an already scheduled stop, are self-evident. The cost is minimal, and the PR is priceless!