

Vinyl Fence *Tip*

Practical and Proven Ways to Sell More Vinyl Fences

From your friends at National Vinyl Products

How to turn your Christmas card into a marketing tool



September. It's the month for picking apples, setting back-to-school schedules, enjoying the early fall weather and selecting Christmas cards. That's right, Christmas cards. Although the holiday season is a few months off, September is the best time to order your company Christmas cards for deep pre-season discounts.

Did you just scoff at the idea of ordering printed cards? Perhaps you either send e-greetings or skip the custom altogether. Well, it's time to change your mind. Sending Christmas cards in the mail to customers and prospective customers should be part of your fencing company's marketing plan. When done the right way, those cheerful greetings can pay you back throughout the year.

Here are five ways you can turn your Christmas card into a marketing tool:

1. They get you noticed.

Each holiday season, your inbox is flooded with e-cards of all kinds. They are easy to ignore. Be honest; how many times do you click the delete button without even opening an e-card?

On the other hand, a Christmas card that is delivered to your home or office stands out. Fewer businesses send greetings this way, so your message is likely to get seen as something valuable. It will be opened and read.

2. They demonstrate appreciation.

We live at a time when we spend much of our time in front of screens. A "snail mail" card communicates that you think the recipient is special, and it goes a long way—at a low price—in building a relationship.

You can use your card as a way to thank a customer for their business, their help with a project or for their work

in the community. When you add a hand-written note to a printed message, you convey a warm, personal touch

3. They last.

Even if your fencing customer reads an e-card, they will delete it soon after reading. However, people usually put their "real" cards on display. If someone gets your card the first week of December, they may place it on a desk, table or bulletin board in their home or office. Your card will be right there, getting noticed for three to four weeks. Not bad for the price of a card and stamp!

4. They reflect your brand.

Your Christmas card reveals a lot about you and your fencing company. It's a great way to show off a photo of your staff, your new fencing products and your logo. Designing your own card is easy with online or in-store templates. And the cost for a unique card is less expensive than you might think.

5. They share peace and goodwill.

The tone of your Christmas card matters. Yes, you want to remind recipients of your fencing products, but this is not the time for a sales pitch. Your card should be all about your customer and the good wishes you have for them and their families.

Send a gift along with the card

Christmas is the time of giving. Avoid including coupons, special discounts or promotions. Instead, if possible, include a gift. You could mail the gift with the card. Or you could invite them to your office to pick up their free gift before December 31. Here are a few gift ideas.

- Christmas wreath
- Fence wreath hanger (an over-the-door hanger works well)



- Evergreen garland to hang on their fence
- A big red bow or a string of lights to hang on their fence
- Fresh fruit basket
- Christmas poinsettia or Christmas cactus
- Holiday teas or coffees
- Calendar
- Coffee mug (perhaps with a packet of hot cider or cocoa inside)

Of course, having people stop by your showroom gives them a chance to see your fencing displays, so be sure to spruce things up for the season. But, resist the urge to turn a gift pick-up into a sales pitch. Instruct your staff to greet these guests warmly, thank them for coming in and give them the free gift without further ado.

If purchasing a supply of free gifts will not work into your end-of-the-year budget, no worries. This unprecedented year has been tough for most companies. Sending a Christmas card with your warm greetings only is still an excellent business practice.

A brief history of Christmas cards

By the way, the tradition of businesses sending Christmas cards goes all the way back to the 19th century. Sir Henry Cole, a British civil servant and inventor, is credited with sending the first commercial Christmas card in 1843. Cole, who helped found the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, fell behind in his written correspondence that winter. He asked his friend, artist John Callcott Horsley, to design a card with an image and a printed greeting to send people in the mail.

Horsley designed a folding card with two side panels depicting charitable acts (clothing the poor and feeding the hungry) and a center panel showing a family Christmas party. The card's message read, "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You." The new idea caught on.

Louis Prang, a German immigrant to the U.S., is considered the father of the American Christmas card. Prang, who operated a lithographic shop in Boston, created the first line of Christmas cards in the U.S. in 1874. Other companies soon created their own versions, and by the end of World War I in 1918, the greeting card industry was well on its way.

Although, in recent years, some families have dropped the tradition of sending a printed, mailed holiday card, American consumers still buy 1.6 billion holiday cards each year, according to the Greeting Card Association. That number doesn't include the custom photo cards many families order and send.

And guess what? Millennials now account for the largest share of greeting card buyers, revealing the "everything old is new again" adage in action.

So, what are you waiting for? Add Christmas card shopping and ordering to your September to-do list, and let this marketing tool work for your fencing company.



If you have questions about this newsletter or marketing in general, e-mail NVP's marketing expert: marketing@nvpfence.com.



www.nvpfence.com
Call or Text 435-623-2750

