Krystal Hobbs (00:00)
All right, Tom, welcome to the show.

Tom Rand (00:02)
Thanks very much. Thanks for having me here.

Krystal Hobbs (00:05)
So I'm very excited because obviously you and I have gotten to know each other through HRAI, through a couple of events, got to see each other at CMPX, and you did a brilliant presentation there. And once I saw that presentation in particular, I was like, my God, we gotta get Tom on the show.

Tom Rand (00:24)
Here I am.

Krystal Hobbs (00:27)
So, Tom, obviously all the work that you do with contractors, you hear a lot of their frustrations and some of the things that they really struggle with when it comes to marketing. What's some of the most common feedback you get from contractors when it comes to their perspective of marketing?

Tom Rand (00:50)
I think fear is probably part of it right now, in particular. we look at the marketplace, we look at what the cost is for customer acquisition. We talk about cost per lead and we see those numbers increasing as the platforms become saturated. There's a lot of fear. You know, how am I going to run my business if an average click is now going to cost $20 or $30 and an average conversion might be as high as a few hundred? And, you know, we know that those days aren't too far away. And I think.

I think we'd be remiss if we didn't say that they're a little bit worried about AI as well, because not everybody is doing a great job implementing it. not everybody is implementing it at all. and that's okay. There's certainly room for differing opinions on this one, but from a perspective of what are people worried about, definitely increasing costs and the rules of the game are evolving and they're changing. And it's happening at such a fast pace, it's very easy to understand how people would feel left behind in this.

Krystal Hobbs (01:46)
Yeah, yeah. And I know we're gonna dig into all of this and obviously one of the biggest things I liked about you and your presentation particularly was that you really break this down and make it very easy for somebody to get that foundational level of understanding when it comes to marketing their business.

Tom Rand (02:08)

It shouldn't be that hard, right? I mean, we know what we're doing. We know that it brings value to customers. All we're trying to do is share that message in a way that other people can understand it. And while there's a lot that goes into that, at the core, it really shouldn't be that difficult.

Krystal Hobbs (02:24)
Yeah. So before we get into marketing specifically for the trades, how did you get in this industry and how did you get involved in marketing?

Tom Rand (02:36)
There's a there's a funny story that my boss loves to tell that he's like, There's only two ways into HVAC, which is that either you're born with a flashlight in your hand holding it probably for your dad, or you got lied to and they said, honey, just answer the phone for a couple of calls and 20 years later you're the co GM of the business with your partner. I I happen to get into it very differently. I don't own an HVAC business. I never have. I ended up spending most of my time growing up in consumer electronics and IT.

And I worked in field sales and retail management. And around the time of the pandemic, it was time to look for something new. And there was a local HVAC branch that was looking for a branch manager. And they approached me on LinkedIn and I had a lovely conversation with the owner. I told him I knew absolutely nothing about HVAC. And he asked me what I knew about people management and operations management. And it turned out that there was a really good fit because they were looking to grow, they had people who knew those things.

So that's how I got in. I learned the industry from somebody who had worked in it at every level as a certified technician, as a dispatcher, a service manager, and a general manager for a very large, you know, regional player. And he taught me everything I needed to know about the industry and how to run one of these businesses. And as that operation kind of normalized and started to grow and and buy more branches and expand, that became an area where we needed a lot more marketing to

clarify the brand message to streamline operations. And that's where I kind of fell into it. I don't know that I was particularly talented at it at first try, but I certainly like doing it. And you know, I I kind of failed my way forward into into a full-time marketing role there and then eventually came where I am now at the climate care head office.

Krystal Hobbs (04:23)
Love that. It's always fun to hear somebody's origin story.

Tom Rand (04:28)
Absolutely.

Krystal Hobbs (04:29)

So, Tom, when we talk about a lot of contractors coming into marketing with a sense of fear, as you said, what's often the starting point that you take when you're helping to coach a contractor through their marketing?

Tom Rand (04:44)
It's a great question. And it really depends on where they're at. And I guess if I was to offer one piece of advice to people would be to start this journey, whether it's on your own with an agency, multiple agencies, do it sooner than later. the problem that we find a lot of times is that marketing is an afterthought. You don't

Krystal Hobbs (05:04)
Mm.

Tom Rand (05:04)
really need to do a whole lot of marketing when you're starting out if you're a very small business. There's word of mouth, there's family, friends, referral programs will certainly help you.

And then all of a sudden you end up in a spot where two years later that's not enough. And that's usually where we get those first phone calls. And they're Help, the phone stopped ringing. I don't know what to do. Can you fix it like tomorrow? And that's that's every marketer's kind of dream and nightmare because yes, of course, we can help. No, we can't fix it tomorrow. It takes planning, it takes execution. there's a journey there to be able to do this right. So I think that's maybe the first.

The first thing we'd say is start earlier, no matter how early you're thinking of starting, that it's all it's late. Start as as quickly as you possibly can before you even open your business, start thinking about it. And it sounds kind of crazy to contractors when you talk to them about that. But if you were to talk to most people who start a business out of nowhere and you'd say, Well, what are you going to do? You're going to go to the bank, you're going to have to present some sort of business case. They're going to ask you for a marketing plan. So it's a bit confounding to me that so many people end up.

running a business somewhat successfully for many years and not really having a solid marketing plan. And that seems like an obvious place to start. It's not so obvious if you don't spend a lot of time in marketing. You only really notice it when there's a problem.

Krystal Hobbs (06:22)
Yeah, it's so true. And like you said, really being proactive about it and starting small and having a plan rather than getting into this position where now it's an emergency, now I don't have any leads coming in and I'm scrambling to try to put something together.

Tom Rand (06:39)
Yeah. People rarely make their best, most considered decisions, whether in business or in personal life, when they're pinned into a corner and things are urgent. That's where we panic.

That's where we make mistakes. When we're calm, we have a little bit of time. That's where we tend to come together with more thoughtful plans and we we tend to see a stronger level of execution in those spaces.

Krystal Hobbs (07:00)
Yeah, absolutely. And I know that a lot of what you've shared previously when it comes to branding versus lead generation, I really want to dig into that because I think that's some of the like very practical stuff that nobody really talks about and a lot of contractors and business owners don't really understand. So

Tell me about the difference in your view there and then what you should be spending or what efforts you should be putting behind branding versus lead generation.

Tom Rand (07:32)
Yeah, it's a it's a tough one that a lot of people overlook. I think we're right to to spend some time and talk about it. And the truth is that it's not a one size fits all approach. Like most marketing plans for businesses, it's gonna vary depending on what your needs are. So for example, we'll break this down for a little bit. If you have a brand new business and you're new in the marketplace, nobody really knows your name, nobody is familiar with your logo, you need to spend some some time, some effort, some money.

On brand awareness. People need to know who you are. At the same time, if you're a 15-year-old business, you've been in the marketplace for a little while, you are reasonably well known there by reputation at least, it's okay to spend less on brand awareness. Not nothing. Nothing is never the right answer, to be clear. There always has to be some spend. Maybe that's gonna be 20% or 30%, but you're gonna want to focus more of your attention and your money on lead generation, making that phone ring and getting customers.

So how this often kind of presents is that a contractor will come to me and they'll say, Hey, like the the phone's not ringing, but I'm doing all of this marketing. And I'm like, okay, awesome. So we'll open up a spreadsheet, write down all of the things you spent money on last year, and we write it down. And usually what it kind of looks like is a Rolodex of every little league sports team in like a, you know, a hundred kilometer radius. And they realize, like, okay, so if I was to ask you how much did you spend on brand awareness, they would say a hundred percent. I'm like, okay, well, how much did we spend on lead gen?

They're like, well, I I I guess that's zero. Okay, do you see where there might be an opportunity here where we need to shift it? The the answer to me, whether you're a brand new business or you're reasonably mature in your marketplace, it's never gonna be 100 or 90-10. It's probably gonna be somewhere in that 70-30 to 6040 split. And it that is just gonna shift a little bit from more brand at the beginning to more lead gen as the business matures.

Krystal Hobbs (09:28)
Yeah,

that makes total sense. And I guess do you given it's obviously a seasonal business, do you see that percentage fluctuating depend on the seasons as well? Or that's generally like the guideline that that you look at?

Tom Rand (09:45)
I think what changes it more is the maturity in the marketplace. So the emergence of new competitors or the disappearance of other competitors. if you're going to a new area, a new service area, that can be really important. So let's say that you're a business in St. John's, Newfoundland, and you've been there for 15 years, and then you decide, well, we're going to expand. We're going to now go into Gander. You're not a 15 year old business in Gander. You're brand new.

So it's okay, and you should be segregating your campaigns, your efforts. there's a lot of tracking you can do. I'm sure we'll get into that at some point. But you can't treat the new business unit serving a new service area the same way as the mature one. It's the same brand, the same logos, the same color palettes, but they're not recognizable to those people. It's brand new in their mind. So you're going to need to shift that pendulum back and really focus on building your brand in that new market first.

Krystal Hobbs (10:40)
Yeah, that makes total sense. So once you're you've got the branding going, you've got lead generation, I know as you've talked about before, one of the key pieces that a lot of contractors miss is that regular re-engagement of their existing customers and leads. What do you typically recommend that contractors do when it comes to their database or their list of people?

Tom Rand (11:08)
Yeah, the database is key. so this is another one where I think starting off on a good foot really helps. If you're changing the the FSM or field service management software that you're using every year or two, depending on how well it transfers from you know platform to platform, you might be leaving huge holes there and you might be erasing customer data or records by accident or having them corrupted. That's not helpful.

So sticking with a platform that you know is good for you today, but good for the foreseeable future, where it gives you room to grow, is really important. Picking a decent software helps, but the biggest piece is really how attentive you are to the details. So it's kind of it's a quality piece, right? It it's it's like anything. If you put garbage in, you'll get garbage out. So you need to be really specific about making sure that you take detailed notes.

You should know your customers' names. You should know the partner's names and whoever else is a decision maker or an influencer at that property. Make a note about their dog's names. You're sending service text to that house, hopefully every year. You ought to know their pets' names. That's not terribly difficult. But understand you should also know when is the equipment installed? What was the date? When's the warranty expire? What brand is it? What's the exact

model number? You know, these can all be really important things if you have to make a warranty claim or if there's a service recall.

You need to know this. You might want to send out a bulletin to say, hey, listen, to anyone who bought brand A model A, B, C equipment in the last five years, there's a recall going out, just like there might be on a vehicle. If you don't have that in your database, you're crippling yourself in your way to reach them with that critical communication. At the same time, there's a lot of great marketing opportunities you can do based on knowing that information about how old it is, what the warranty status is.

and just what quality it is. Maybe there's something new that's come on the market and you wanna let people know, but you're certainly not gonna share that message with people who already have equipment that does those things, right?

Krystal Hobbs (13:08)
Yeah, yeah. And I know you talked about an example as well in terms of marketing membership plans as an example. How do you do that with like what kind of information should people be collecting and then how do they segment their list appropriately with something like that?

Tom Rand (13:28)
Yeah, your your messages are going to be very different. You know, I think generally speaking, the goal of the membership program is twofold. One, you know, from the customer perspective, it allows them to get access to a certified professional at a lower cost and maintain a relationship with them. And it's a little bit more convenient and autopilot. You don't have to worry about calling and booking appointments. Usually your contractor will reach out to you and say, Hey, Crystal, it's time for your spring tune-up. What's the best day for us to reach you?

On the contractor side, it's helpful because it's a measure of what your market share looks like. And it allows you to make sure that you can pull work forward into the shoulder seasons. And that's one of the bigger challenges we see in so many home services industries, whether we're talking HVAC, roofing, even garage doors, there's a lot of times that the weather just makes it really hard to do the work, or there's just no need because the weather is too calm. And I think.

being able to have a large membership database to be able to move work into the spring and into the fall so that you're available for the emergencies in the dead heat of summer and in in the cold, frosty nights of winter is really helpful. So it benefits both people. And, you know, the messages you send to those people are going to be different. Certainly you're not going to plaster your members with the benefits of all of the membership plans that they've got. They're already signed up. At the same time, you know, if customers you do business with regularly are not members,

You ought to be telling them about these programs, letting them know that they can save money, jump to the front of the line, not pay after hours fee, whatever the particular benefits are of your program, and they certainly vary a little bit from industry to industry and contractor to

contractor. The benefit remains generally the same. It's better to be a member. So let your folks know about that.

Krystal Hobbs (15:16)
Yeah, I love that. And I think that's such a practical example. But again, only something that you can do if you are properly collecting data because you need that to be able to segment out so that you're you're sharing the right messages with the right people.

Tom Rand (15:35)
For sure. And the depth of the data matters too, right? So I know in HVAC in particular, memberships are usually ascribed not to a household, but generally to a piece of equipment. So if I come out to your home, we repair your furnace, we tell you about our great membership program, you sign up. Now you're gonna get a tune up on that every year, and you've got some savings built into those service calls. That doesn't necessarily mean that we've had a discussion about your hot water tank or maybe your tankless heater, maybe you have a boiler system.

Probably you have an air conditioner or a heat pump that's offering some cooling. It's important to know those things because you don't want to just say, this person has one membership and we're done. Your goal is to really offer them the most value, the most service. And that means covering all of the different pieces of equipment that are in the home. Your database is the central hub of intelligence about what is my market penetration? How many services or pieces of equipment do I have in my portfolio?

I think a contractor who has a thousand member customers and five thousand pieces of equipment is significantly farther ahead and better penetrated than a contractor with five thousand members with one piece of equipment each.

Krystal Hobbs (16:42)
Right. Yeah, that's such a vital point. So when you talk about some of these, I guess, small habits of like collecting proper data, obviously any business owners listening to this, that makes sense. But how do you how do you see the best contractors getting their team on board and you know, making sure everyone from the technician to the CSR is properly recording this kind of thing?

Tom Rand (17:12)
Yeah, I think one of the tricks is to have the conversation with the whole team. And we see this a lot where we tend to silo things. So our maintenance department doesn't talk to the service department, doesn't talk to the install department. And those technicians driving around in vans and working in the shop certainly don't go talking to the people who are in the office running the administration and the membership programs and answering the phones. But that's a real problem. And I think the more you get the team on the same page, the easier it can be.

So in this example, what I would say is, listen, this is why we need this data. We want to be able to market and communicate to customers. We want to look professional. We certainly don't want

to reach out and talk to them about a membership program they already have or about replacing a 12-year-old furnace that actually we replaced two years ago about oops, we forgot to update our records. So you tell everybody this and you're like, this is why it's important. This is why we're going to start tagging accounts. When you pick up the phone and it says update equipment information, do that.

Please don't hang up the phone for whatever reason they're calling until you can get that information. And similarly, if we're assuming the cost of going out to this person's home, driving the van there, performing a diagnostic, maybe doing a repair or even a routine maintenance, what a sin to have not taken an extra 30 seconds to grab the serial number of the equipment. So you know the warranty information and you know the make model manufacture. And most of that equipment all lives within about 10 feet of space in the home. So it's really not that hard if you're there for one.

Getting the other one isn't gravy. It's absolutely essential. Don't get that van out of the driveway until you've got the information. Cause you only get one or two swings a year at that. And if you miss, now you've gone another year without marketing to that person properly.

Krystal Hobbs (18:50)
Yeah, yeah. And I love that point about, you know, if you don't have that information yet, starting to collect that going forward. But if an existing customer calls in, your team recognizes, hey, we don't have this info, making sure that that's part of their process to update that.

Tom Rand (19:09)
Yeah. When they know the why, they tend to be on board, right? Like this will help grow our membership program. This will help our company stay financially viable. This will help us communicate more effectively with customers. These are all things that everyone in your company wants. You just have to connect the dots a little bit and explain the why. And then they'll understand the pain of what it's like to have a database that has a thousand customers who have missing email addresses or non-textable phone numbers. These are all things that need to be addressed. And you can do it piece by piece.

Nobody's database is perfect. We we don't expect that. But if you start with strong habits or if you're in the middle of switching your database, making sure that you flag the things that need attention and you are attentive to them on the few phone calls and visits you get in a year really puts you in a better position really quickly.

Krystal Hobbs (19:54)
Yeah, that makes total sense. So in your experience as far as the outreach that contractors are doing, are you seeing that by phone, by email, by text? What do you see actually working right now?

Tom Rand (20:12)

I think it's important to note that it's more about your customer than it is about your contractor. So there are definitely contractors who are very strong on email campaigns. There are some who are great at outbound calling. Whether they do that in-house or third party, it's kind of immaterial. some are very popular with direct mail. They love sending out flyers and they do a very, very good job of it. But the truth is that it doesn't really matter what you like as the contractor.

Whether you're the marketing agency supporting them or you're the owner of that business, what you are into is not necessarily what your customers are into. You 100% have customers who actually read the flyers, even if 90% of them just put them in the blue box right away. That's okay. You have customers who scroll right past all of the paid ads on Google and start looking at organic results. Just like you have customers who would prefer that you take the time to give them a phone call and other people who can't stand telemarketing.

So the truth is that you need to start doing everything if you want to reach everyone. And if that's not your goal, if you're really looking for a very specific target, you should also realize that it takes a couple of times. Nobody looks at an ad once usually and goes, wow, this is revolutionary. I absolutely need this product right away. Especially when it comes to home services. Cause these are like grudge purchases, right? Nobody wants to replace the roof or their garage door or their furnace. These aren't like sexy appealing things that we've been saving up for and we're gonna

show off to our friends on the the weekend cocktail party. This is something that someone came over and said, hey, by the way, like if you don't replace this, your house is going to be in a lot of trouble. And you're like, okay. So making sure that you're top of mind all the time is really important because nobody is going out looking for you before they need you. The goal is that when they find you, they recognize you. And that only happens because they've seen you typically five to seven times before. That's how many times it takes

For you to actually sit in the

Krystal Hobbs (22:09)
Yeah, I love that, I think, especially the point about it doesn't matter what you like, it's what the customer likes. And you're absolutely correct that different people are are going to react differently to different things. So you need to have multiple communication channels that you're reaching out with frequently.

Tom Rand (22:30)
100%. And remembering too that even if you don't get a win on the outbound phone call or the outbound email, they can still have a halo effect and improve the marketing that you're doing with Google LSA or your SEO efforts on your website, right? It these things don't live in vacuums. Some of these things are very easy to measure digitally, some of them are not. But it's important to note that your conversion probability goes up.

every time that you are appearing somewhere that a customer is going to recognize you. Doesn't matter if it's the jersey of a little league team, a billboard that they drove by, a radio ad, or something online. One is always helping the other in some way.

Krystal Hobbs (23:11)
Yeah, yeah. And I think that's a great segue too. And of course there's going to be this, as you said, this halo effect that all of these things are gonna contribute to help you grow your business. But of course, when we're looking at where to invest our marketing dollars, most of the time we're looking at, you know, what channels are paying off and what ones aren't.

So when it comes to tracking, what do you advise contractors to do to see what's actually working for them?

Tom Rand (23:43)
Yeah. First of all, track it. The amount of people who

Krystal Hobbs (23:45)
Yeah.

Tom Rand (23:47)
are not tracking their marketing or are doing it in a in a very non-specific way where they say, you know, I did two million dollars in business this year and I spent $75,000 in marketing. What should I do next year? And you're like, I I guess I'll do the same. That's just throwing darts in the dark, right? Like, especially with digital marketing, there's so many easier ways to measure it. And I think it's important to understand.

what those measuring tapes are and how they work. So for example, digital marketing can be really complicated for people who don't spend a lot of time doing it because there's a million acronyms out there. And people get confused, and rightly so. Understanding the difference between customer cost, cost per lead, acquisition, impression share rates, these are complex technical terms for people who don't live in these spaces. But what you can do is use a measuring tool

That lives in your software that allows you to know, okay, here's how much I spent, here's how much that brought in in terms of service calls, install revenue, maintenance plan revenue, et cetera. there's one tool in particular that I always recommend. It's a brilliant tool. it's made here in North America. It's one of the US's fastest thousand-growing companies. It's called Searchlight. you can look them up at searchlightdigital.io.

They have a really awesome origin story. You can check it out on YouTube, but it it was almost made as like a bet where the founder of this, who has a lot of experience marketing, has a dad who works in the services. And his dad always thought that marketing is fluff and it's nonsense and you don't need to do it. And he basically set out on a bet to prove him wrong. And years later is employing like PhD data scientists who are combing through all sorts of things right

down to Google Click IDs to show you that marketing does in fact work and where you can spend that will bring you more.

And where you should not spend. I think it's an important piece to realize that as much as marketing in the digital space, especially, can be kind of scientific and formulaic in approach, it's still marketing. There's still an art to it. And not everything is gonna work, especially the first time. That's okay. That doesn't, that's not a reason not to do it. You know, like it's it's been said that perfect is often the enemy of done. And if you want to get the marketing done, you gotta start somewhere. You gotta try. So make it bad, then make it good.

And you can do there's a lot that you can do with A-B testing, with, you know, doing things in different markets to see where the reaction is. but start somewhere and just have a way to measure it.

Krystal Hobbs (26:17)
Yeah, yeah, I think that's crucial. And I mean sometimes it's as simple as having tracking phone numbers that you use one thing on your social media, you use something else on your Google LSA and a different one on y your billboard so that you can actually see what's what's driving things.

Tom Rand (26:37)
Should absolutely be doing that. Like that is 100% best practice, in my view, is and in your field service management software, it usually will track all of those phone numbers, let you know where that's going. Sometimes that's integrated. Sometimes that's a function you pay more for, depending on what your software arrangement looks like. But having that data, even when you pay a small amount of money for it every month, helps inform the larger question of where do I do more? Where do I do less? Am I getting value for the money that I'm spending?

And that's an urgent question. I've spoken with so many contractors who've been losing sleep, just wondering, is this even working? And, you know, being able to get a definitive answer to that question that yes, you know, the money I spent is bringing in more revenue, or it isn't in this case, and I'm gonna pivot and do something different rather than just scratch my head or take someone else's word for it. Absolutely foundational.

Krystal Hobbs (27:31)
I'm curious, Tom, with the companies that you work with, what are you seeing now that things in the economy are a little bit more uncertain? Are people holding on to their marketing dollars more? Are they investing more in marketing? What's going on and what do you think they should be doing?

Tom Rand (27:53)
Yeah, what what they're doing and what I'd like them to do are not always gonna be exactly the same

Krystal Hobbs (27:56)
Ha ha ha.

Tom Rand (27:57)
thing. You know, I work very much in an advisory capacity. So it's my thought is often, you know, when you see things change in the economy and you see recession signs or indicators and you see cost of living getting inflated and you see people are guarding their wallets, we know that people are not gonna be making expenditures that are not necessary. And it's tricky in home services because most of the things that we're spending money on.

Are necessary, it's just a matter of to what degree. And sometimes that means that people are going to be repairing equipment that's very old because they don't have the budget to be able to replace it. And that's not always a great decision. And if you have a great marketing campaign and an operation where you're talking with your customer every year, you're letting them know that we're getting close to the end of life cycle. We should start budgeting and putting something aside. We know we're going to be having this conversation in probably another one or two years. It takes the sting out of it because it's no longer

A surprise. And I think that that's a really important piece. It's the relationship management piece. making sure your customers aren't surprised. And that's how you make sure that no matter how hard the conversation is, it still comes across as being genuine and honest because it is and it comes from a good place. As for marketing, certainly when we see this, we we tend to see companies when things are not going terribly well, number one area to slash marketing, right? We'll save

Krystal Hobbs (29:17)
Yeah, yeah.

Tom Rand (29:18)
on marketing. And I think when you think about how your business looks.

You've got a couple of top line expenses and a whole bunch of things below the line. your electricity costs are going up. Certainly, right now we know that fuel costs are going up for your fleet vehicles. marketing costs are starting to increase, and it seems like a very obvious place to be able to slash and to save money. But marketing, I would argue, is the only thing in your operating expenses that is actually an investment if you do it right. And this is where my position remains very firm.

that you should be doing it and you should be measuring it. If you're saving on marketing, it's probably going to cost you more on the top line in the future than the actual savings are worth today.

Krystal Hobbs (30:02)
Yeah, yeah. Yes. That's all I've got to say to that. Just

Tom Rand (30:07)
Ha ha ha.

Krystal Hobbs (30:08)
yes. A hundred percent. And yeah, it is it it's often I I think as some marketers looking at that, it's often a bit heartbreaking and and a bit discouraging because yeah, I look at those situations and I'm like, this is only going to put you further behind and in a worse position.

in hard times, you know, that's when you need to be marketing the most.

Tom Rand (30:37)
I'd agree. And I think that it speaks to also the importance of having a great relationship between the contractor and the marketing. Whether that's an you know, a third party agency or multiple agencies or it's someone in your company. This isn't something where you should just be writing a blank check and walking away and you know, pinging them once every six months to see how it's going. This should this is a living, breathing thing. We need to know which campaigns are working. Are the phones ringing more? You know, there are things that you need to

Establish in this relationship, tell me what good looks like. Let me know as your marketer, am I doing a good job for you? Because if you, if you get an answer that, yes, this month the phones are ringing more. We made revenue on this, we're getting tons of clicks and calls from this campaign. You're not going to have a conversation the very next month after six months of success that says we're slashing your budget. And so I think it's important for marketers, if you're watching this podcast, to remember that the client relationship is the key here.

And you're you need to be communicating with them in a very, very regular way. Like you're integral to their business operation. Marketing is not this thing that we do when we have extra time or extra money. It's something we do to make sure that we don't run out of either of those resources.

Krystal Hobbs (31:48)
Yes, absolutely. Yeah, it's one thing we always tell our clients as well is like we need the feedback loop. I need to know that the leads we're sending are actually becoming appointments and customers and at what rate and at what cost and working together collaboratively to see what this is actually doing. So systems are a big part of that, having, you know, an FSM or CRM that you can see.

what's actually happening, but yeah, that communication piece, whether that's your in house marketer or an outside team, that you are giving them the data, you're letting them know what's actually moving through the sales process.

Tom Rand (32:31)

And give them a fair shake at the beginning. Like the amount of people I've had conversations with who, you know, it starts, well, we hired this marketing agency, you know, three months ago and we're not really seeing results and we're gonna fire them. And we want your recommendation on who to hire now. Like 90 days is generally not enough for anybody to come in and turn things upside down on a sinking ship. I think we need to be realistic about what it is that we're trying to accomplish, how we're going to measure success, and check in on that weekly if you need to.

And just are things going in the right direction and be patient with it. Cause if things are building, if every week you're getting good feedback and things are going well and they're getting better, it's okay that there's blips that we didn't have a great week, but we're gonna get back on track. But it eliminates those elements of surprise, right? To me, marketing is very much a partnership. And when your business is big enough, you probably will have someone internally who is responsible for it. And they might be working with agencies to help them with the creative and the ads management and the campaign management.

But until you get there and you're relying entirely on your agency, you need to make sure that you're communicating with them about how good of a job they're doing. And, you know, blowing off those meetings is just not going to be okay. You're not going to see your business grow or even stabilize the way you need if you're not giving the marketer what they need. They need to understand the drive times of your business. They need to understand the local market that you probably have a unique perspective on.

There's all sorts of data that lives in your business, in your books, in your database, in your brain, in your history that they just don't have access to. That doesn't mean that they can't be helpful. It just means you need to share that with them in order to help unlock the shackles that are there and then let them get to work on the things that they do best. We don't need to be seeing 10 proofs of an ad and every graphic copy and having a round table decision about which graphic we like best. Let the people who do this for a living give them some breathing room, but just show them if the results are good.

You know it's worth.

Krystal Hobbs (34:27)
Absolutely. Tom, people are gonna think I hired you for this podcast.

Tom Rand (34:31)
Ha ha ha.

Krystal Hobbs (34:33)
No, but it it's so true and and I think that's so valuable coming from somebody like you that has seen inside so many different contracting businesses and and know how marketing works and how to make it work for you.

Tom Rand (34:49)
Yeah, I've been on I've kind of been on both sides, which is interesting. And and the position that I have right now is that I'm very much an intermediary. it's it's an interesting position where, you know, I'm not the marketing agency and I'm not the company either. I'm just that facilitator in between. And I get both sides of it. Like the complaints that I've heard from marketers are as numerous as the complaints I've heard from contractors about marketers. I'm just trying to, you know, facilitate this conversation so that everybody can get along.

Because when it goes really well and you love your marketing agency and they're doing great work for you, they're going to be significantly happier. You have a better relationship and you're both getting what you need. The business is flourishing, you're getting a higher fee, you're getting great feedback and better reviews. The cycle just continues that way. At the same at the same token, you know, when that's not the case and the communication breaks down, that is the place that the the budget will get slashed. And it's just gonna be an unfortunate outcome for both parties in that case. And I think we all really want the same things.

We're invested in each other's success. And if you can wrap your head around that really basic and simple idea that the marketers aren't there to rob you, they're there to make sure that they make you more money than you give them. Then it takes away a lot of that apprehension.

Krystal Hobbs (36:00)
Absolutely. Yeah, and I think that's probably the perfect place to wrap up here, Tom, because there are so many helpful nuggets in everything that you just shared there. And ultimately, I think helping contractors to be a little less fearful when it comes to their marketing. So for anybody listening that wants to learn more about you or connect with you further, what's the best way for them to do that?

Tom Rand (36:30)
I'm on LinkedIn. You can find me with with my name. I work at the Climate Care Canada Cooperative. It's Canada's largest co-op of H VAC independently owned contractors. So you can certainly find me there and I'd be happy to join your podcast, have a conversation with you, and you know, just run an idea by me anytime.

Krystal Hobbs (36:48)
Incredible. And as always, we'll put all those links in the show notes as well. Tom, thank you so much for being on the show today.

Tom Rand (36:57)
Thanks for having me. It's been a blast.

Krystal Hobbs (36:58)
Yeah.