

Marketing to Site Selectors



Basic Rules of Engagement

Rule One: If you want site selectors to keep you in mind, they need to know who you are. That means making regular contact. The trick is to do it in a way that doesn't come on too strong.

Rule Two: Be useful. Know what site selectors want and then give it to them even if it means putting less emphasis on your own sales pitch.

Rule Three: Bend over backwards to meet any requests for information. The quicker you can respond, the better. Site selectors are in a hurry. Don't waste their time.

Rule Four: You are not and cannot be the perfect community for every project. Don't market yourself that way. Focus on your true strengths.

What Site Selectors Want Most Economic development organizations spend a lot of time and money on surveys to understand the kinds of information site selectors want and the ways they want to receive it.

The indexes vary somewhat, ranking things differently from one to the next. But generally speaking, the Most Wanted list includes:

- Data, including labor market information
- Details on available land, sites and buildings
- Major companies and employers
- Major industries and sectors
- Incentives
- Workforce data
- Utility and infrastructure capacity
- Education and training programs
- Quality of life

Web Focus



Simply put: A good website is a site selector's best friend. Make sure your community's website is buddy-worthy.

Community and economic development websites favored by site selectors have a few things in common.

- They are fast.
- They are easy to find.
- They are easy to use.
- They have the right content, organized in the right way.
- They have conspicuous contact information.
- They are long on facts and short on fluff.
- They provide unique data in formats that site selectors can download and manipulate themselves.

Most important, the information is fresh. Effective use of a website demands that its content be updated on a planned and regular basis. Think of it as a pet that requires constant care and grooming.

Data that is old is useless to site selectors and a website that is poorly organized and contains perished information can leave a most unfavorable impression with the people you most want to impress.

Marketing Tools

Get Some Face Time

Personal visits can be quite positive both for your community and the site selector. Offer to pay the site selector a visit at a convenient time several weeks in the offing or arrange to take a group of selectors on tour of your community or region. Be ready to pay the expenses in either case.

At any face-to-face meeting, it's important to work together. If you're visiting the site selector, bring along one or two key people from your region. These should be people who know business, know the region and who can make things happen.

If site selectors are visiting your community or region, have a formal presentation about your community. Limit the guest list but make sure key players are all in attendance: political leaders, prominent businessmen and women, lenders, the local utility, presidents of colleges, universities and influential civic organizations.

Conferences and trade shows can be effective, provided they target industries where your community offers distinct advantages.

To make the best of your investment, do a couple waves of advanced marketing to consultants and groups that you know will be attending. Make them aware that you're going to be there and that you'd like some of their time.

Newsletters

Site selectors generally agree that regular electronic newsletters are important and effective. Make them brief and easy to read. They must contain genuine news, not fluff.

Some recommendations:

- Send monthly or quarterly
- Avoid downloads
- Use bullets instead of text
- Use links for more detailed information
- Remember, success is a powerful promotional tool. Be sure and highlight expansions, relocations and positive changes in the business climate.

Marketing Brochures

Some site selectors dislike printed pieces, others appreciate something brief they can tuck into a briefcase and read later. A few guidelines for effective printed material:

Focus on the most important message.

Avoid the temptation to overstuff brochures and fact sheets with data.

Identify what sets your community and region apart.

Always include your website address.

Advertising Campaigns

There's no magic ad. No single purchase in a publication, no matter how prominent it might be, will have site selectors flocking to your community.

To be effective, ad campaigns must be regular and sustained something that many communities simply cannot afford. If you do buy ads, here are a few guidelines:

Choose the right instrument to target the right audience.

Make sure the advertisement makes you stand out of the crowd.

Other Electronic Promotions

Site selectors tend to agree there are better ways to spend your scarce marketing dollars than on those pricey promotional videos and CDs. Most of the time they go straight from the mail to the trash.

Embedded links on email newsletters to short, unique video promotions on websites such as YouTube may be far less expensive and somewhat more interesting and engaging, but the jury is out on their effectiveness.

Many communities are developing marketing campaigns that take advantage of social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Second Life and the like.

It's too soon to know whether these will be worth the time and money invested. As with any other promotional device, choose the tool favored by a targeted audience and then carefully tailor your message to the audience and the medium.

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NEWS
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