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CURRENT ISSUE FEATURE

June 28, 2004

Taking Care of B2B

By Chris Daniels

EXECUTRADE

Earning customer attention

Although for the last 30 years Edmonton-based Executrade has been one of the top executive recruitment firms in Alberta, president Richard Stoppler calls his marketing efforts, until recently, "hit and miss."



Some years the firm would spend more than \$70,000 on ads targeting clients in the *Edmonton Journal*, with little return on investment. Some client accounts would often go dormant because Executrade would fail to maintain communications. "A lot of people may have known our name, but they had no idea what we did," adds Stoppler. "Our image was very grey."

With the help of Incite Solutions, an Edmonton-based business-to-business marketing firm, Executrade has changed that image to something a little sunnier. In fact, since hiring Incite two years ago, Stoppler says revenues for the \$10-million-plus firm have skyrocketed by 400% and, even more impressive, profits by 800%. He attributes that to a marketing approach that seeks the attention of his target in a memorable, yet unobtrusive, way.



Print advertising has been dropped in favour of event-style, word-of-mouth marketing. For example, during a "Random Acts of Kindness" week in February, at a restaurant frequented weekday mornings by business executives, Executrade picked up breakfast tabs. And for an upcoming certified management accountants meeting, the firm is sponsoring a \$10,000 hole-in-one contest. Participants who fail to win can then enter a draw to win a free golf lesson.

"So everyone has a ticket stub with our name and logo on it, and during the banquet we'll have a draw for lessons since the joke is they weren't good enough to win the hole in one," says Stoppler. "It is a great way of remembering who we are without being in their face."

"This word-of-mouth marketing engages their existing database (contacts), who will be more likely to tell others about Executrade," says Jared Smith, principal of Incite. "Most of their business will originate from their existing

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database, so we do about 15 to 20 initiatives a year to engage them."

Stoppler says even though he is spending the same amount on marketing as he has in previous years, he is receiving more business from existing clients in addition to working with new ones. "People know what we do now," says Stoppler. "The consistency in stepping outside the box in our marketing message is paying off."

CHRIS DANIELS is a freelance writer based in Toronto.

