
The Hunting Ranch, Outfitter, and Guide Service's Marketing Handbook

Secrets the Outdoor Industry Won't Tell You About Marketing, Outside Sales, Networking, Sponsorship, Operating
on a Budget, and more...

by Dustin Vaughn Warncke

The logo for Warncke Enterprises, featuring the company name in a bold, yellow, serif font with a slight 3D effect, set against a solid dark green rectangular background.

WARNCKE ENTERPRISES

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Introduction: Starting Out on the Trail

The catalyst for this project came from a project I first started doing for outdoor TV shows. This resulted in a video and an E-Book but after I finished writing the book I got to thinking that the knowledge I provided would carry over to other parts of the industry. So this project started coming to fruition as another resource guide. Guide services and outfitter businesses are close to my heart and I love to see businesses like these in the industry grow and prosper.

I am an outdoor writer, outdoor TV show host, outdoor industry consultant, web designer, videographer, video editor, Pro-Staff for several companies and outfitters, sales and marketing director, public relations representative and a few other things in the outdoor industry. I started my work in the outdoor industry building a website for a hunting ranch in trade for a few hog hunts. I then used my outside sales skills from my main career in product fundraising sales to non-profit organizations to sell hunting packaging and learned how sales and marketing worked in the outdoor industry. I helped that hunting ranch grow into a full-time operation with several employees and a side business in exotic game sales and trapping services. My business, Warncke Enterprises, has grown from there. I have accomplished more in the outdoor industry than I ever imagined and am grateful for every bit of it. I thank God every day for all that I have had, all that I have, and all that I shall have one day.

My accomplishments in this industry did not come easy and, most likely; yours haven't either. That is the cost we all pay to play this game. We have all seen businesses, among them guide services and outfitters, never make it to their potential and run out of steam due to a variety of reasons. This book should serve as a resource guide to anyone at any stage of the process from having an established business to just starting out in building one. I have jam-packed this project full of my years of knowledge and experience from all of the roles I play. In many ways, I have the perspective of many positions in the industry due to my work in various roles. I know how they all think and what most of them view as important as I have helped many people, TV shows, businesses, and organizations soar to new heights in this competitive and sometimes cut-throat industry. Likewise, that is my goal for you.

As the old saying goes, "The price of success is hard work and dedication and the rent is due every day". My challenge to you is to do something, however small it might be, every day to build your brand in the outdoor industry. This is a crowded market and everyone thinks they are worth the world's attention. The truth is that, unless you are wealthy, famous, or both, the road can be long to get to a reasonable level of success. The nice part is that there are guys like me who are along with you for the journey. I have experience in many areas of the outdoor industry and I am here to help you. Thank you for purchasing this book and I assure you that you will gain a wealth of knowledge from dedicating some time to reading what I have produced.

Since I am not a fan of ridiculously long books, inflated with a lot of filler just to make them longer, I made the format of this book in short segments which should be easy to read. That being said, as I promise all of the folks I work with in the outdoor industry and other parts of my life, I promise you the best quality, value and service, from the material I have presented here. I also decided to make this an e-book instead of a traditional print book so you

can easily navigate to the resources I have provided, via providing hyperlinks and other resources, to allow easy access to the outside website, videos, and other content, on whatever device you are using to read this. We also saved a few trees together. See, outdoorsmen are better environmentalists than the hippy tree-huggers would have you believe! Thank you again for purchasing this resource and I hope you enjoy the journey with me.

Warmest Regards,

Dustin Vaughn Warncke

Business Relationships: Hire Slow, Fire Fast

This is a principal that I think is one of the key elements in any business today and is something I coach business owners in any industry to do. Take into consideration the entirety of a potential employee or partner, their past track record and work history, and their overall character and work ethic. The decision you make in the hiring process of an employee or partnering process with another guide service or outfitter is crucial. Don't rush into anything. If your instinct is telling you something, listen to it. Intuition can play a major role here. I have experienced several examples of business partnering decisions that should have never been made and business relationships that should have been ended a long time before they actually were. In every case, it would have been in the best interests of both parties involved.

One of the outfitters I have done consulting for had a guide working for him on a ranch who did a decent job putting clients on animals and had a great success rate. He was personable and easy going and most of the clients enjoyed having him as a guide. Two main issues existed in this guide's character and work ethic that ended up involving my help in the problems he created for the outfitter. For one, he complained about everything. It was too early, too late, too hot, too far to drive, you name it. If the client didn't tip well, we heard about it. If he had an issue with one of the owners of the ranch and needed to vent, my phone was ringing. This got old quick both for me and the outfitter. The second issue was that he didn't make it a priority to handle some of the less glorifying jobs of a hunting ranch, mainly cleaning up the gut piles and boned out carcasses that remained after skinning, capping, and quartering the animals after the hunt was over.

With the hot Texas weather in the triple digits for days on end during the summertime, this quickly became an issue. Aside from the smell and appearance, these by-products attracted flies and other pests around where the hunters would meet. And, as we have covered, people talk. They talk even more if they have an unfavorable experience like pulling into camp next to a cleaning station that hasn't been cleaned up for three days. This guide obviously enjoyed the money. He was making extra cash on cleaning fees and guide tips but was tired and lazy after his hunters left for the day and never attended to the rest of the job he was responsible for doing. This outfitter lost many clients due to this and I was the one responsible for proverbially cleaning up the mess he left on the hunting forums and other places where people were expressing their disgust at what they saw. I couldn't walk into our local area archery pro-shop without having someone pull me aside with a negative report. And guess who had to come in and clean that mess up and save the ranches reputation? I am glad I am good at public relations work as I had to "jump on a few grenades" for that outfitter. This, in turn, cost the ranch extra resources to pay me for my time and work and also turned many clients away from ever returning to hunt there again. One problem the outfitter and owner of this ranch realized quickly, with a little help from me as well, was that he was not paying enough attention to what this guide was doing, or not doing in this case, and that he could have taken care of the issues long before they mounted into the PR nightmare that I had to fix. I advised this guide be let go but instead he was moved to another business the outfitter owned where he was not dealing directly with clients and gut piles. This was a wise move, but one that should have been made long before it went this far.

Another good example comes from a fishing guide service on the Texas Gulf Coast that I've fished with often. He had a fishing guide working under him guiding trips that he did not have time to handle himself. He knew this guide had a past in drugs and alcohol, which many people in our society these days do, but felt that the guide had made some drastic life changes and was on a better track. This job was a great opportunity to serve others and the owner of the guide services really needed the help. One day, the guide pulled into the drive way, hitched to his boat, and made a B-line to somewhere in a hurry. A police officer visited the owner's lodge shortly after, explaining that he was looking for this guide. When the owner questioned what had happened, the officer explained that the guide was the suspect in a hit and run with a school bus a few miles away. It turns out the guide had relapsed and tried to hide it. Now he was in deep. "He twisted off," the owner of the guide service told me. Yes, he did. Now that the owner thought about it more, hind sight was 20/20. He had noticed some suspicious behavior from the guide and had a few regular customers that would fish with him every year never come back. Now he knew why. Alcoholics and former drug addicts are great disguisers of relapsed behavior. I am not suggesting that anyone with a past in substance abuse cannot be trusted at all but there are signs to watch for that should set off alarm bells.

You may never get a second chance to make a first impression. The people you hire and partner with are always representing you when you are away. Trust and integrity are the backbone to any partnership or other relationship and transparency and understanding are paramount components to lasting relationships. Although these are two separate cases, the image of the guide service and outfitter were ruined by the action of one person and the time, money, and effort to repair situations like these can come at a great cost. Be in touch with those you work with and those who work for you. Make sure they are representing you well and check in with clients often to get a report of their experience. While you can't be there all the time to watch how someone is representing you, there are many ways you can keep a measure on how the people who represent you are helping or hurting your business.

When issues begin to appear with the performance of a partner or employee, have a frank conversation and discuss an improvement plan. If they continue, it's time to make a choice. I have seen far more pain and suffering in business relationships when a swift and sure separation is not made and hanging onto the relationship was chosen out of convenience or what is comfortable. I equate relationships that get strung along like this to a toddler with a dirty diaper. "Yes, I know I am wet...But it's warm and it's mine." When the time comes to pull the trigger on a decision like this, don't be afraid to do it, as it will probably be better for both of you in the long run.

In the hiring or partnering process, take time to get testimonials and references of the person in question and lots of them. You don't want to just find the people that the applicant wanting to work with or for you sends you to but also some people he or she knows and has worked with that they didn't share with you. What are they doing in social media? This is one of the first places many large employers check when they look at hiring someone in today's market place. If they present themselves poorly to the world through their social media outlets, how well will they represent you at work? Even if they are "All Business" for you at work, a person's individual character cannot hide its spots and their character will be the source of how they make decisions that affect your business in the long run. If there is an immaturity or commitment issue in their personal life, it is going to most likely affect your

business eventually. While you can't judge a book by its cover, you can get enough credible information to help you make an educated decision. You will be grateful you took the time to do this in the long run.

Competitive Market Analysis

One of the main problems many outdoor businesses encounter is not watching the market of what they are selling and not paying attention to what the competition is offering in relation to what you are providing. It never hurts to look around and see what other competitive guide services or outfitters are offering in comparison to your services and prices. Keep in mind that people operate off of their perceptions, not yours. I have seen many businesses go under simply because they were not paying attention to the rates they were offering for clients compared to what other new or established guides or outfitters were offering for a similar package.

Recently, one of my clients started to split their time between guiding in north Texas and Central Texas and about that time, some new kids on the block started a guide service in an effort to take his customers away. Two things worked in his favor here. His pricing was lower than the competition as he had less overhead. The new guide service showed up with an expensive top of the line boat and huge payments to cover whereas he had an older boat and lower expenses. The second factor was that he was well established in the area and his prices were lower. The only question then was: who did a better job of marketing to new clients?

Although you need to have your head in the game of pleasing your customers, and this can be and usually is a full time job in and of itself, I often advise my clients to be on the lookout for competing businesses around you. What are they offering that you aren't in the form of overall value and service? What are you doing to guard against your customers working with someone else in the future? Why do they want to come back to you? How does your pricing and the value of what you are offering compare to the other services locally, nationally, and even worldwide? Could you describe the value of what you provide to your customers if I woke you up in the middle of the night and asked you? These are all good thoughts to keep in mind as you run your business. One of our small local lakes here in Central Texas has 12 guide services competing for the same customers year round.

Your potential clients could do one of three things: Book with you, Book with someone else, or Do nothing at all. You want to be the catalyst in helping them make that decision. Setting yourself apart from the rest of the pack here is paramount. You want to be the most preferred business out of them all. We will continue to explore ways to set yourself apart from your competition later in this book.

Many people look at competition as a negative. I don't. Instead, as we see many times with businesses in the outdoor industry and other parts of general business economics, the more competition, the better it is for the end consumer. I embrace competition and analyzing the market around me as an opportunity to be better than whatever and whoever else is out there. You should take this as your challenge as well.

Clients: The Good the Bad and the Ugly

If you have been guiding or outfitting long, you know that there are many different people who make up your clientele in your book of business. If you are new to this world of the outdoor industry, it's a melting pot of different personalities, preferences, and experience levels. I always consult outdoor industry businesses in any field to put their best and most professional foot forward. Most clients are generally easy going, then there is that small percentage of "others". No matter what you do or say, they are going to have a bad experience.

Many problems a client can potentially have with you can be prevented by good communication and customer service skills. There are certainly a multitude of factors which can affect an overall experience but I always recommend guides and outfitters to take the "high road" every time when dealing with irrational, irresponsible, or just plain ignorant people. In this section, we will cover a few key points of making your future experiences good ones and what to do when someone gets sideways with you for one reason or another.

Set the expectation. On your website or other media platform where you list what to bring, include "a good attitude". The weather may be horrible and there may be very little action on the water or in the field but a good attitude from both you and your clients will solve many of your battles before they exist.

Have a good pre-trip meeting. This is another opportunity for you to set the expectation. Ask some questions to your clients to see where their experience level is and brief them on the process and plan of the trip and the gear. Lead with enthusiasm, even if you have to fake it in some cases. I know what it's like to be up early or work tirelessly into the night on guide trips. Remember, your attitude is going to play the biggest part in setting the stage for how the trip will go.

Know your role. Remember, you are the leader in this realm. The client depends on your experience, knowledge, and equipment. Look at working with them as with a team, much like a band director leads a concert. I have seen the bad of both extremes, either the guide did all the work and made all the decisions or the customer tried to call all the shots on the trip. This should be a joint venture.

Ask your clients questions often. The more they feel like they are a part of your overall game plan of success for them, the more favorable they will look at you during and after the trip.

When things go wrong, keep moving. Most of life's problems fall into two categories: Things you can control and Things you can't control. When issues, like bad weather, become an issue, tackle them with your customers immediately where necessary, especially when safety is a concern. Ask what the client would prefer to do. If they defer to your judgment, use your best assessment and keep moving. If an issue is no big deal to you, it usually will be no big deal with them. If it is, deal with it.

Don't blow off customer complaints or concerns . I have known of many situations where clients have had a complaint or concern they brought to a guide's attention but it was ignored or trumped over in favor of something else. My view on this is that if something is an issue for the client, it needs to be an issue for you.

Address it immediately and move on the best you can. If a client feels ignored, you are taking the chance of burying a proverbial skeleton in the closet that may come out to haunt you later.

Tell stories and have fun. I know some incredibly gifted guides and outfitters in many parts of the industry. I remember the ones who made me laugh and taught me new things the most. You don't have to be a stand-up comedian to do a good job. Just be sociable. The guides who are boring usually do not have as many return customers than those who tell stories, teach well, and serve their customers well in the process. Remember, clients are paying you for your knowledge in an area they want to excel in as a recreation. You don't have to teach them everything you know but have some interesting tidbits and facts about the area, techniques for them to use in the future, the list goes on. One of my favorite guide trips was on Matagorda Bay in the Gulf of Mexico on the Texas Gulf Coast. The guide was a local historian and told me fascinating stories about the history of the lighthouse on Matagorda Island, which was around during the Civil War era. He also showed us the area where one of the shipwrecks from Robert Cavalier Sieur de La Salle's "Le Belle" had been discovered after over 300 years! I love this kind of stuff and most people have at least some passing interest in history like this and are interested in stories from your past and the history of the area you work.

Summarize the trip with your customers. Near the end of the trip with your clients, ask them what they thought of the adventure with you and see what they have to say. I run into many guides who are afraid to do this. There is no harm in asking some closing questions and most people will be truthful with you about their experience. It is better to get any issues out in the open and work on a plan to fix them in the future than to let the client walk away upset about something and go tell your competition or other potential clients about it.

It must be noted here that the internet can be one of the best or worst tools for your business. I have seen some guide services and outfitters gain horrible reputations by getting slammed by negative comments on outdoor forums and social media platforms by past clients and even people who jump in on the dog pile who have no reason to post anything as they have never had an experience with them. As I mentioned earlier in this book, I have had to come to the rescue in PR cases like these in more than a few cases through my business and many of the accusations I had to defend were unfounded, unqualified, and made by people who have no business commenting on anything having to do with the business. One thing the internet has lent itself to is making everyone who has an opinion an "expert." It isn't fair that the internet has this power but it is the way things are in the world today. Make sure you have their permission and share their experiences with others where you can. As we all know, there are certainly factors that go into a good or bad experience on a guide trip and if you have been at this for a while, you most likely know them well. While bad weather, tough fishing or hunting conditions, or other factors can contribute to a less than ideal experience, you ultimately are the saving grace for how that customer leaves their experience with you and whether or not they come back. Most guides and outfitters I work with know how to do this well or at least do everything they can to better a given situation to the benefit of the client.

In cases where you have someone proverbially "flopping on the floor and foaming at the mouth" mad at you about something, stay calm and cool. Don't let yourself be dragged into a situation you will have to dig yourself back out of

later. If you get a heated e-mail or post on your social media platform, don't reply to it right away but instead sit on it for a day and think about your response. Don't let anyone have the power over you and your emotions. There is not one situation I have found in this industry that should be the cause of anything less than professionalism from the guide or outfitter in response. Always, and I mean always, take the high road. It is always worth it to you and your business in the long term. I have had to deal with people who have over-inflated egos, more money than sense, and are complete irrational boneheads. Sometimes the best you can do is offer a partial refund, ask them to only cover your expenses of the trip, or offer them a future trip. Sometimes none of those things work and you just have to cowboy up and move on down the road.

Back to the good news again. The main message here is to serve your clients well and invite them to share their experience with others around them after their trip with you. Invite them to e-mail you testimonials, post them on your social media site, and then use them in your brochures and other print media where applicable. Make the good outweigh the bad. You can't and won't please everyone. Every business has its share of clients who are jerks and nothing you will say or do will make them happy due to their unreasonable or sometimes irrational expectations. If you do a good job and attempt to take care of all of your clients to the best of your ability, they will fight for you in situations when others try to put you in a bad light in a public setting on the internet or elsewhere. I have seen this happen over and over in my public relations ventures for clients I work for and it's the best, most organic way to defend your reputation when others attack it. As Paul said in the book of Romans in the Bible, "Be excellent in what is good. Be innocent of evil." This is some simple but valuable advice to follow in your daily work.

Form Strategic Partnerships

In any kind of business platform, you usually become valuable to the extent to which you provide value to others. Forming strategic partnerships with guide services around you or networking with other guide services and outfitters nationwide or even abroad can help you grow your brand and business to new heights. Zig Ziglar once said, “If you help enough people get what they want, you will get what you want.” This is a philosophy I live by every day. Networking and forming partnerships with those in and related to your guide service is important. It is also said that a partnership is the only ship that doesn’t sail. The kind of partnership I am talking about here is a mutually beneficial relationship with other businesses inside or outside your specialty. Some outfitters and guides I approach with this idea are threatened by even the thought of sharing their business with someone else or referring a current client elsewhere for another adventure but the possibilities that can come from it are usually beneficial to both parties as long as the right foundation is in place. There are two ways to approach this idea: crosspollination partnerships and lateral-service partnerships.

A good reason to form a strategic partnership laterally is that you may end up having to turn people away during your busy booking times and you may also need business in times you are not booked solid. Having another guide service, who might even be your competition in some ways, send you business and vice versa as the season plays out might be what keeps the lights on some months. What if you had to take a leave of absence or had to cancel a trip? Having a fellow outfitter or guide to call on who could handle it for you is the best option for both you and the client and you never know when the favor will be returned. The main theme here in any case should be a mutually beneficial and balanced relationship, much like a marriage. There will be give and take but when your lateral partner can spin off a few trips to you in the slow season; it might just be what you need when you needed it.

A good example of a crosspollination relationship was a recent connection I made with GARQUEST Bowfishing Adventures (www.garquest.com) and DB Hunting Ranch (www.dbhunting.com). Since it might be appealing to some clients who wanted to incorporate both bowfishing on the water and hunting game animals on land together in a trip, I was part of the catalyst in forming this partnership. There is no real threat to either business in connecting the two. It is as simple as a recommendation on the phone when booking a guide trip. If the client wants to do more than just hunting, you have another option. This works the other way around with bowfishing. At least both options are available. People will still usually make a choice between bowfishing or hog hunting or maybe even both. In both cases though, both businesses are in affect “scratching each others backs”, tit for tat, quid pro quo, whatever you want to call it. These are win-win relationships as it gives both businesses larger exposure and marketing platforms, as I have back linked them to each other on their respective websites, and, even more importantly, it gives a client more options. Similarly, I have seen many relationships like this prosper. A fishing guide teaming up with a duck hunting guide service for a “Cast N’ Blast” package is a good example of this. A morning and evening semi-guided hunting combo package with a guided fishing trip in the middle of the day between hunts is another effective use of this. If it is advantageous for the client, he will thank both of you for it with his business over and over again. If you already have some relationships like this, and I know many outfitters and guides already do,

consider being creative and innovative and branch out to some areas. Today's clients like adventure and plenty of it.

As we talked about in the previous chapter, it must be noted again that care must be taken in who you partner with and even those you take under your wing to help get started. I feel it necessary to share some more experiences of situations that did not go right to give an understanding for what to look for before forming networking partnerships with others around you and even bringing on an apprentice wanting to learn your trade. I cannot stress this enough: Always be aware. I know of far too many situations where someone has utilized a guide or outfitter's services extensively or sought after training or teaching from them, only to become a competitor of theirs down the road. This was the exact situation that played out with one of my clients. He taught a newcomer to his particular sport who fished with him on regular occasions what equipment and gear to use, how to run guide trips, and more. After a while, the man disappeared, never to be heard from by the veteran guide again. His apprentice burned the bridge he had with him and gave him no credit or accolades, let alone some spin-off business or other perks for what he had learned and even moved on to being on major TV shows and being one of the best-known guides in the state for his specialty. The guide who taught him everything the new outfitter knew was used and abused. It's unfortunate but we must be on guard for people like this. Make sure you set firm expectations and even consider a signed non-compete agreement or non-disclosure agreement with apprentice relationships you form or, especially, fellow established guides and outfitters you consider networking with in the future.

In the case of one of my other clients, we had a guide who learned all that he could from the client's hunting ranch and relocated several hours away to start his own ranch. The owner of the ranch knew this and, seeing as it would be no direct geographical competition, gave him his best wishes. However, instead of coming up with his own business plan including his hunting fees and rates, suppliers, and more, he went behind the scenes and stole ours. Because I was consulting for this ranch, I had formulated a marketing plan as well as helped with their advertising and I could tell what was going on. I would even inadvertently put spelling errors in a "hunt specials" post I would put up for the ranch and he would copy it and use it as his own every time I did this. Seeing that this was not only my work but information he was stealing from his former employer, I made contact with this guide and, in a rather frank manner, suggested he come up with his own ideas and not borrow or steal someone else's business model. While it is common to borrow and adapt best practices of successful business, it is also a general rule to give credit where it is due to those who brought you to the party and help you get where you want to go in your business.

Also, consider learning something new. Sharpen your skill set or learn new skills and be of service to others in new ways. As adults, this is a hard thing to do sometimes but one of the best ways to create value for yourself is to create value for others. Don't give up on learning something that might help you or be of value to others in the future. If you know nothing about building websites, designing brochures, public speaking, or a number of other things, seek out the resources to learn these things. In our society today, more so than any time in history, knowledge is power. The more you know, the more you can be of value to your team, to the other people around you, and, ultimately, to yourself. I consider myself of great value because I know how to do many things that can help many people and I am in high demand for that reason. I am not afraid of a challenge and most of what I know in the realm of technology, I have taught myself. I have a college education but my major was music and education, not business

or marketing. Most of what I learned about the outdoor industry came from experience and the mentors I have surrounded myself with to guide me along the way. Out of that experience and ability, I have built my business around people in the outdoor industry needing these services or needing to learn more about them for themselves.

You can easily get stuck in a rut if you don't branch out. Many people get comfortable with who they already know and what they have accomplished and stay there. I try to stay out of my comfort zone as much as possible to keep things fresh and new. You never know what will happen if you keep moving, learning, and developing with new people in the industry on a regular basis.

Sponsorship for your Business

Sponsors are an important part of your business as they can help you save money and promote products and services that can help your clients. Approach the sponsors you want first and try to find the contact information for the marketing director, public relations director, or even social media director, depending on the size of the company. If you are able to see local businesses in person, stop by and introduce yourself. Many sales training seminars and books have the saying, “You can delete an e-mail or throw away a brochure but it is HARD to get rid of a human body!” Be clear with what your goals are and keep in mind how and why a relationship with you will be beneficial to the potential sponsor.

Seek to provide value in return for products or services you receive and approach these sponsor opportunities with your “hat in hand”. Be humble at all costs. Everyone in this industry has an ego and is proud of what they have created. The outdoor industry is a hard industry to gain traction in sometimes and there is a lot of competition to get the same products and services available today. Once again, this is a place where you have to stand out from the masses of other businesses, TV shows, and other people out there trying to earn this consideration for sponsorship and having the right approach is the first step of this success model.

When seeking contact information, try to get a direct line to the decision maker. A direct phone number or extension to the person you are trying to reach is always best so you can talk to someone in person, but is not always available. E-mail addresses are second best. If you e-mail someone who may not be the decision maker, make sure you include an invitation for them to send you the correct person’s contact information and possibly also forward your e-mail to them on your behalf.

Here is an example of an e-mail I use for a “cold call” situation. In other words this is the initial contact I am making with a sponsor with whom we have no previous relationship or who knows nothing about me or what I do in the industry. The company I was e-mailing in this case was a small start-up company making a scope mounting system that required no drilling or tapping for the World War II era Mosin Nagant bolt action military surplus rifle. This gun is very popular in many parts of the shooting industry today. Add to that the fact that this gun was produced from 1891 to the late 1950’s and had origins from multiple countries and you have a pretty cool weapon. Needless to say, this particular after-market product was something I had been on the search for in the surplus gun parts market for a long time:

Dear Jeff,

I own five Mosin Nagants and have done videos about them, the accessories available for them and have even filmed hunts with them. I work with a TV Show and my main Mosin video, which is 27 minutes long, has had over 35,000 views. A subscriber came to me and asked about your mount. I have been looking for this concept for a long time. I wanted to do a video about this mount but wanted to see if you would be willing to send me one of your mounts at dealer cost or sample cost, or perhaps, at no cost, if I pay for shipping. In trade I will produce a video segment dedicated to

your mount for our show and for use on your website, social media, etc. Here are my videos on the Mosin Nagant, which are available on You Tube:

The Mosin Nagant Information Video

<http://youtu.be/T30zqmp3bBk>

Whitetail Deer Hunt with my Mosin

<http://youtu.be/M4519guTcEq>

I am also an avid outdoor writer and do articles on new products all the time. Please see:

<http://www.macandprowler.com/Articles.html>

I am sure you get asked for discounts or free product people promising the moon to you all the time but I will come through for you. Darrel from Darrel's Scout Mounts for the Mosin from years past even contacted me last month impressed with the work I did on my videos and how I showcased his products. I realize you are probably overwhelmed with orders right now and may not need the publicity. In any case, I am so excited someone finally came up with something I have been dreaming of and searching for over many years. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

--

Dustin Vaughn Warncke

In this email, I am direct about my interest in his product, my experience with the Mosin Nagant rifle, the captive audience I have built around previous videos I have done on the Mosin, and previous work I have done showcasing other products like this one. In other words, I am establishing credibility with him up front. I am in no way saying that I deserve anything I have not earned. I am simply making a request and wanting to start a relationship with the sponsor. This is a soft touch and a sort of prospector email, just seeing if building a partnership is possible. I wanted this mount and I wanted to offer him more exposure in return for sending it to me for free or at a discount.

How did this work out? He indeed was over-extended with orders at the time I sent this to him. He invited me to stay in touch and that was exactly what I did. I decided to buy the entire mount system from him at retail cost because I wanted it regardless of the price or relationship I would build with him. Other people had made videos on sites such as YouTube before but all of them looked unprofessional and homemade. I decided to do a video on his product anyway, expecting nothing in return. I sent an e-mail back to Jeff asking him, if I did a video on his product line, what he might like me to cover as far as pointers and tech tips. You can see the video of me installing this mount from start to finish here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qj-Nssi1MBA

I sent the video to him and here was his response:

Hey Dustin, Happy 4th of July! What do I think of the video?

I think you did a fine job and covered all the pointers I recommended very well! I hope you get many views on YouTube, as you will stand out from the other installation videos.

There is a saying, "The workman is worthy of his hire" (loosely quoted here), which is to say, pay the man for a job well done! That being said I have credited your PayPal account for the mount you purchased.

Perhaps our paths might cross again in the future as I have several other mount designs for the Mosin I am working on as well as a few mods for other firearms. So many ideas and so little time for R&D.

Thanks again,

Jeff

www.jmeckscopemounts.com

The feeling of receiving an e-mail like this is awesome. While my filming and production work cost far more than the \$79.00 mount plus shipping costs, I did this to keep building an audience and work on my branding. You certainly can weigh if it is feasible or worth it to you and your time to do something like this. It's just an idea. In my case, I really wanted a Jmeck scope mount system so I knew a good installation video would be a good investment of my time as I had to install it anyway. All relationships may not work out like this one did but I made an impression on Jeff and we started a relationship together which continues to prosper in new ways today. I gave him more than he expected and promoted his product with a good representation of how to install and use it. This is a good example of how I have started relationships with sponsors for my own personal branding in the outdoor industry and I have repeated this same process with many sponsors I currently have today.

In any communication with potential sponsors, talk less about yourself and your business and more about what you can do for the sponsor with your business. Everyone listens to "WII-FM" or "What's In It For Me?" There are plenty of relationships that never make it off the ground because they lead the charge into talking with sponsors about how great their show is or will be and what kind of potential they will have. Most advertisers could care less about that. They are in business to stay in business and turn a profit so they can keep the doors open and the lights on in the future. Their whole livelihood, their product or service, branding, exposure and more is constantly in the back of their minds. The question they are usually asking is "How can you help me grow my business?" or "What can I give you to get the most in return." It is critical that you understand what their motivations are before you approach them.

Most sponsors fall into the categories of money sponsors or product sponsors. Some fall into both categories. As you might expect, the competition for money sponsors is in high demand and short supply. Start relationships with small sponsors at first, then show what you can do, and go from there. Developing videos for your product sponsors and showcasing them as part of your social media and website is one way to show you are doing more for them than even the current businesses they are spending money with, if any such relationships exist. The main focus should

always be in creating value and strengthening the relationship between you and the sponsor. Stay in touch with them often and show them what value you are providing them. I have a relationship with a sponsor where I have featured him in videos and articles every chance I get. He sends me every new product he launches and calls me often as he knows how much I like his company and what I, with my networking and connections in the industry, am capable of doing for him. Those are the kind of relationships you want to build.

Many times money sponsors do not get back what they put in and may be gun shy to work with you as a money sponsor for that reason. Recently, I heard a story of a start-up company spending over \$11,000 with a well known outdoor TV show for a season on The Outdoor Channel and never saw one product sale from the sponsorship. Another sponsor sent a business \$15,000 for money sponsorship and never saw a return on the investment so the business sent the money back.

There is no free lunch. The relationship must be symbiotic and mutually beneficial, meaning both parties will gain value from the relationship. Many guide services and outfitters I encounter have these visions of sponsors spending obscene amounts of money with them because their service is the best one ever created. This is rarely the case. Unfortunately, as the old saying goes, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” That being the case, unless you know the sponsor well through a relationship you have built, it’s not a bad idea to get your agreement in writing, even if it is just for product from them in trade for promotion with you and your business.

Always remember to be grateful for what you receive from sponsors. They didn’t have to give you anything or partner with you at all. You will attract more friends than enemies if you express gratitude for what you have received from your sponsors, however large or small the value, and offer value in return. Be humble and grateful. This is something that is missing from many businesses I see in the industry today who seek to get what they can from one sponsor, burn the bridge, and then move on to the next one.

Some sponsors will never return your phone call or return your e-mail. Be polite but persistent. I have only gained sponsors from following up and staying in touch with current and prospective sponsors. Keep in mind that gaining sponsors is a sales and marketing job. **If you don’t get in the habit of following up with potential sponsors, don’t expect much in return.** This is a crucial point that most people pursuing these opportunities miss and something I cannot stress enough. Unless you are extremely well known, businesses are not going to beat a path to your door and try to get you to work with them. They have other things on their mind. I am in outside sales for a living so this is second-nature to me but most people, even guides, outfitters, and business owners don’t follow the principle of following up and staying in touch with the people with whom they want to form relationships. A polite e-mail or phone call/voicemail can be a friendly light touch to keep you on their mind. Sometimes it just takes that one more contact attempt before you reach the decision maker or before they respond favorably to your request. Then, you’re in!

It is human nature to fear rejection but you have to have a tough skin in this industry. If you have been at this for a while, you know that well. Many things never come to fruition. There are more companies that will turn your request down for sponsorship or partnership than those who will respond positively. Get used to the word “NO”. It

will come to your door often. You have to learn that rejection is part of the game. It's not personal. It's just the way things are. The more resilient you are when pushing through the hard times, the brighter the good times really become in the long run.

Share other product sponsor's videos you have made or other content you have made showcasing other sponsors. This is proof you know what you are doing and that you have the ability to provide value to others in the industry. Even if you only post some short video clips on a video streaming site online and send a link to them or mention a sponsor in an article or blog and leave a link to it, the chances of potential sponsors checking them out are relatively high. What they are interested in is how you will represent them if they choose to work with you.

Give more value than you expect to receive in return. In starting any relationship in the outdoor industry, you have to prove a sponsor can trust you before they can start a relationship with you. Once again, you have to take the initiative to stand out from the rest of the outdoor shows and lead with a positive attitude. People remember politeness, gratitude, and kindness from the people they sponsor or people who seek their sponsorship. People will also remember folks who are rude, careless, or ungrateful for what they receive. Once again, if you use a sponsor's product or service in your hunting, fishing, or other outdoor adventure, send the content you created from it as soon as you have it edited. Stay in touch with them, even if you have nothing to report and are just touching bases. Most sponsors in the outdoor industry, much like most people in today's world, are overwhelmed and overextended with their own business and personal matters and sometimes will never reach back out to you unless you reach out to them first.

Larger companies will usually set their company budgets at the first of the year. Be one of the "first in line" of potential new relationships they make when they make their money or product sponsorship decisions for the year and get in contact with them early and often. Remember, polite but persistent. Professional but direct. Seek to build the relationship first and then proceed on working together on a partnership.

For most outfitters and guides, companies who sponsor you may offer you free or reduced cost product. Many fishing guides I know get dealer or wholesale pricing on their boat, outboard motor, or gear from sponsors in return for promoting them as part of their daily work and having the sponsors' logo present on their boat.

Along with sponsors, consider seeking out some Pro-Staff positions. Building relationships with outfitters is an easy way to get your first Pro-Staff positions as Pro-Staff members serve as experts in the industry for the product or service they represent. Most Pro-Staff positions are paid in products or services and many times do not come with monetary compensation for the members. For instance, one of the archery industry Pro-Staff positions I hold yields me two packs of broadheads (a \$40 retail value each) and a product T-Shirt (a \$20 value) each year and offers very attractive dealer pricing on other products, including more broadheads if I need to order more. In trade for this, the individual who receives a Pro-Staff position holds an expert position in the company and is expected to represent and help market that company whenever they are around other outdoor industry consumers. In my case with Grim Reaper Broadheads, I wear my T-Shirts at 3D archery tournaments and other places where an opportunity presents itself. The company gets inexpensive promotion and the Pro-Staffer gets free or discounted products and a title of an

expert in the industry. Since you don't want to be Pro-Staff for competing product or service companies, consider applying for Pro-Staff positions in a variety of fields in the outdoor industry or encourage new or smaller companies to start a Pro-Staff program and add you as a recognized Pro-Staff member. This is good business sense as it is cross-pollination for promoting both parties.

Consider adding Pro-Staff positions to your own company if you do not have them already. These could be as easy as offering writers, TV show hosts, or other people you work with in the industry a position as an expert on part of your team. Even if you run your business by yourself, this alone will make you appear as a larger, more established business.

If you can afford it, take a trip to the SHOT Show or ATA show, which are the largest outdoor industry trade shows in the nation for the shooting sports and archery industries. There are also large national trade shows for fishing but I am not an expert on those yet. Most large shows usually happen in the early part of the calendar year. NRA shows, gun shows, outdoor expos, and other industry events are also good places to find large and small companies to try to partner with and gain sponsorship consideration as well as other networking connections. Keep in mind, anyone you represent as a sponsor will represent you and your business and vice versa. My policy is that I only use sponsors I believe in and stand by their products and services. On the other side of the coin, sponsors have to believe in me and trust that I will represent their products or services in the right manner. That is the kind of relationship you want with your sponsors. Don't lead the charge "Leeroy Jenkins" style (keyword search "Leeroy Jenkins", or see the video here: <http://youtu.be/LkCNJRfSZBU> if that doesn't make sense and you will see what I mean. There is some colorful language but you will get the point!). When you are visiting sponsors, approach them professionally and always lead with the value you want to provide the sponsor, not what you desire to get in return.

Whenever meeting the owner or representative of a potential sponsorship business in person or even on the phone, be sure to lead with statements such as, "Our business is growing and we would like to build a relationship with you." That is a statement that shows the intent to partner in a mutually beneficial way but is not a threat to anyone. At the end of your conversation, always leave the conversation with a statement such as, "Thank you for your time today. I really hope to stay in touch with you in the future." Another statement I frequently use is, "We love your product/service and hope to provide value for growing your business in the future." So many people do not know how to approach a relationship like this and, instead, lead with how wonderful and different they are from the rest of the pack.

Until a relationship is formed and they know you are serious about working with and providing value for them, talk less about you and more about them. Unless they ask, don't bring your accomplishments in the outdoor industry into the main stage spotlight. As the famous sales trainer and motivational speaker Zig Ziglar once said, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Sponsors will not build a relationship with you until they know they can trust you.

One big mistake I see people make is to end e-mails, phone conversations, or even in-person visits with a statement such as, "I look forward to hearing back from you." Don't count on it. Most people will forget all about you and your

business the minute you leave a meeting with them or they see an e-mail or hear a phone message from you. Expecting them to do otherwise is a futile effort. It's just the way things are. You HAVE to stay in touch with them in the future and take the first steps towards building the relationship. If I didn't have the sales background and knew what I was doing before I became a TV show host, marketing director, and outdoor business owner, I would be in a far different place than I am now and would not have realized anywhere near the same level of success.

Make a list of all of your prospective sponsors and other outdoor industry connections in a spreadsheet and update it often. Every show or event I attend, I make a new list of who I saw, the key contact information for the decision maker, and notes about how the meeting or cold call went with each contact I made. This can be your lifeline down the road. It is an easy way to stay organized and not have to keep up with stacks of business cards or notes written on cocktail napkins from the bar you were at one night. Simplicity and organization will win you more battles and save you more trouble in the long run.

With the theme of staying in touch, consider sending e-mails individually but put some of your "form e-mails" into different categories in a word processing document so you copy and paste them individually, adding a personal touch to each one before you send it. This will save you hours of typing the same things over and over again. I do this all the time and it is a huge time-saver. This is a form of automation where you can get more done in less time.

Write in your own style and speak from the heart but don't come off as "a guy off of the street". Lead with professionalism. Anything less will be ignored. I have advised many clients on how to send good e-mails that will lend to a high probability of success. One thing I have to get on some folks for is writing like you are talking to your neighbor or drinking a beer with a friend. There is a time and place for that kind of dialogue and it is not here, at least not at first. In this section, I will share some emails with you that I have used in the past with success:

Following up After a Phone Conversation

Dear Al,

It was great to talk with you on the phone today and I wish you safe travels in your business ventures. Below is the information I sent you back in February. I know you mentioned sending me Dan's info. We talked with him at the SHOT Show last year and he said he would send us some products for our show. This is a PERFECT product for what we do in predator hunting and we can't wait to showcase this product on our show. Thank you so much for staying in touch and sending me his info when you get a chance. Thank you as well for your time and consideration in partnering with us in the future!

Warmest Regards,

Dustin Vaughn Warncke

Thanking an Existing Sponsor for Sending Product

Dear Amy,

Thank you again for taking a few minutes to talk with me this morning in regards to the article I am writing for EoTech this week and agreeing to send me a test model of the HHS2 holographic sight or whatever you have available. We value EoTech as a product sponsor and hope to continue to work with you in the future. Attached is our Media Kit, which I revised recently with all of our TV and Web TV affiliates for your review. I am working on your article this week and it will appear at {LINK HERE}

Please send that Demo/Tester EoTech Sight to:

Warncke Enterprises
Dustin Warncke
(My office address listed here)

Please let me know if you need anything else and thank you again so much for working with us!

Warmest Regards,

Dustin Vaughn Warncke

Following up with a Prospective Sponsor

Dear Connie,

I hope you are doing fantastic this week. I just wanted to stay in touch with you, per your request, on product sponsorship with our show. We are interested in your bowfishing and bowhunting products and will feature both of them as part of our show. Thank you again for your time and consideration!

Dustin Vaughn Warncke

Setting up a Meeting at the SHOT Show

Stephanie,

I just wanted to touch bases again about meeting with you next week at SHOT. I am trying to put a schedule together for our team. Do you have your booth number assignment yet? We are going to be with Olympic Arms in booth 16727. We would love to talk with you about product sponsorship or see

what other possibilities exist for the future. Please stay in touch and thanks again!

Warmest Regards,

Dustin Vaughn Warncke

Showing a Current Sponsor How I am Promoting Them

Dear Mr. Evans,

I just wanted to send you some links of videos where recently I featured your products. I also made your company one of my feature sponsors for the Accuracy and Hog Hunt videos I recently produced. Thanks again for staying in touch and partnering with us!

Dustin's Summer Hog Hunt at DB Hunting Ranch

<http://youtu.be/4AxkTBjDNlo>

(Featured as an end sponsor.)

Practical Accuracy Fundamentals for Rifles and Handguns - Mosin Nagant, Makarov, & ATI Stocks

<http://youtu.be/p6P5oLOXI1o>

(Featured as an end sponsor and throughout the video.)

ATI Gun Stocks Review - Mosin Nagant, Ruger 10/22 and more!

<http://youtu.be/p1XJNfoxZik>

(Featured the your product on both guns)

Barnett Crossbows Product Review - C5 Wildcat & BCX Buck Commander Extreme

<http://youtu.be/eDecQnMgNfc>

(Featured your product on both Crossbows in the video.)

Thank you again for working with us!

Dustin Vaughn Warncke

My main goal in including these e-mail examples is to show my basic outline for making a “light touch” with potential or existing sponsors. Most of these are short and to the point. Again, they are not boastful or trying to prove a huge point. The main purpose and goal is to build the relationship and continue to strengthen the relationship. The outdoor industry is full of people who have large egos and are proud of what they have accomplished. It is not an easy world to thrive in all of the time, especially if you do not approach contacting key people and forming relationships the appropriate way. I have seen far too many people in the realm of the outdoor industry who have a big hat, but no cattle. In other words, they represent themselves or their business as something that is overinflated. Balance and moderation must be used in every part of what you do. You can be proud of your accomplishments but do not be “stuck on yourself” about how good you or your team really is at the end of the day.

That is a major turn-off to most people in general but especially in this industry. That was another reason why I wanted to show you the way I relate to those with which I am wishing to build a relationship or continue an existing one. If you want to “borrow” my sales and marketing ideas, you are welcome to do so, just please do not copy and paste them as your own. Come up with your own language but consider the theme I have presented here as a template.

If you have a sponsor you really want to impress and develop a future relationship with, start by using their products and promoting them without sponsorship. Then, send a picture, link to a video, or otherwise show them how you are promoting them as a part of what you do. If they don't express any interest after attempts to reach out to them, move on. However, most companies, especially smaller companies, will take notice of what you are doing for them first without expecting anything in return and will seek to build a relationship with you in return.

One thing I started doing with sponsors where I had personally built a relationship and gained some experience or where I had gained a Pro-Staff position in the industry is to build an “Outdoor Industry Resume”. I have this on my personal website at <https://dustinsprojects.com> and also on social media/networking platforms. This has worked to my benefit as I continue to build off of my accomplishments and, with a resume, have a way I can show prospective companies how I have helped other companies and why they should consider me in whatever position or goal I am perusing with them. Telling is not selling so having a tool like this in your arsenal is irrefutable proof that you know what you are talking about. It may take you some time to build a resume like this but it is something you can carry with you wherever you go in the future.

A good example of an accomplishment to celebrate in a platform like this is one of the companies I work with that started out very small and only had one prototype product for which I helped write a marketing proposal. I did consulting with the owner on product packaging and accessories that the product would include. As the product progressed towards the launching phase, I served as one of the prototype testers and advisors. This product is now one of the best selling products in its category in Cabela's online and retail stores nationwide. Those are the kind of things you want to share with the world. They show that you know what you are talking about. This company owner and I became friends over this process and I still do consulting for him as he develops and tests new products. Again, mutually beneficial, quid pro quo, whatever you want to call it - we take care of each other. When people ask how I did this or what set of skills I had to get something like this accomplished, I simply say that it was an open-ended relationship with the owner and a knowledge of the market and pricing of his product compared to his competition. I was able to fit a need he had and we grew together from there. In this particular product category, the competition is fierce and cut-throat so we worked as a team to come up with better components, accessories, overall packaging, and pricing in comparison to what was on the market. At first, we just traded products and services back and forth with each other and moved up from there as he could afford to do more. The money or kick-backs were less important than the experiences and accomplishments. Outdoor industry companies take notice of people and teams who “move the needle” for other companies and grow overall sales and the spectrum of marketing exposure. They want to know how you did it and what you can possibly do for them if you possess these types of skills.

Non-profit organizations, product and service companies, and even other outfitters and guides are many times

naturally curious for what's new and better and what can help them grow. If they find you, what impression will you make and will they see more value in you than someone else? You may only have one chance to make something happen.

Promotional Materials

I am proud to say that marketing on a budget and public relations work in the outdoor industry are some of the things I am well known for and fun parts of what I do for the clients I serve. As with many small businesses, many of the businesses I serve do not have a large marketing budget. Many of the outdoor industry businesses I serve that are seasonal, such as deer processors and taxidermist, can barely afford their own health insurance, let alone spending money marketing and promoting their business. There are obviously numerous ways out there to build your branding, advertise and get your phone ringing. The purpose of this section is to share some ways to be effective and efficient with your time and money and get in front of as many people as possible.

Business Cards, Brochures, and more

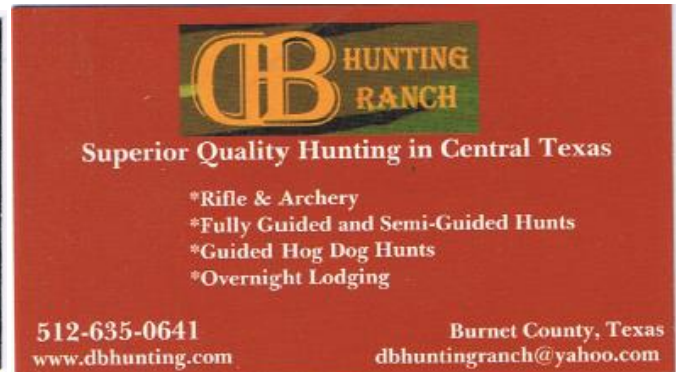
Business cards are among the best marketing tools you can use and something most businesses have or produce soon after they start out. Most clients expect you to have them and for them to be accessible if they asked for them. A problem I see with some of the guides and outfitters is that I do a better job representing and networking their business with the use of business cards than they do and this is another case for having someone like me, who lives and breathes sales and marketing, on your team. Your business card should be simple but attractive, informative but not too wordy. Potential and existing clients will hold on to a business card that is attractive and professional and usually trash a business card that is not soon after they pick it up. I have included some examples of business cards my clients use already and cards I have designed myself for their businesses. With the advent of modern technology, many people believe that social media platforms, websites, and other technological advancements will, or already have, replaced the need for business cards but I strongly believe they are still essential to a prosperous business model. A business card should be a way for you to stay in front of your past and future clients. It is a reminder that you exist and for them to visit your website, call you, see what you are doing in social media or other parts of your business. Printing professional business cards is among the cheapest and easiest things to do.

One thing I urge guides and outfitters to do is to design custom cards instead of using templates such as the ones available on printing service websites such as Vista Print (www.vistaprint.com). While the cost will be more, setting yourself apart from your competition in how you present your business in a business card is critical. I have two clients who use template business cards and it drives me crazy as it becomes harder for me to brand them as unique and original. No matter the size of your business, strive to stand out from the pack and look original in what you present in your business card. It may be the only link you have to sending business to you in some cases.

Business Card Examples



Custom Business Card Designed by Author (Left)



Client-Designed Card Featuring World Record Bowfishing Trophy (Right)

Another platform in print media you can invest in is brochures or even rectangle lobby-style cards. It's like having a larger, more in depth business card. These have been very successful tools for many of the businesses I have worked with. I have presented some examples below of a brochure and lobby card I have designed. I use Microsoft Publisher to create most of these kind of marketing tools. If designing these kind of things is not your strong point, and it usually isn't for most outfitters and guides, don't let that be the reason why you don't produce them. Paying someone to create them is not as expensive as you might think and it's usually just a one-time fee. After these products are designed, keep the raw files so you can edit and make changes as needed.

One of the best things you can do with lobby cards and brochures is to leave them with local hotels, restaurants, or retail businesses where it is permissible by the business owner to do so and a fit for the market you are trying to reach. Also consider giving them to current clients to share with someone they know might be interested in using you in the future. One of my clients leaves their business cards inside their overnight lodges so guests can take one with them when they leave. This is one of the easiest passive marketing tools you can use for growing your business.

DBHR Brochure Designed by Author



Located in Burnet County, our ranch is just Northwest of Austin, near the towns of Bertram and Oatmeal in the Texas Hill Country.





Hog Dog Hunts






Burnet County, Texas

Phone
512.635.0641

Website
www.dbhunting.com

Email
dbhuntingranch@yahoo.com

*Year Round
Weekend and Weekday Hunts*

- ⇒ Wild Hog Hunts
- ⇒ Exotic Game Hunts
- ⇒ African Game Hunts
- ⇒ Hog Dog Hunts








DB Hunting Ranch has been host annual youth hunts, corporate outings, as well as many other special events and gatherings. Many TV Shows have also filmed hunts on our ranch that have aired on national TV networks.





Our ranch features several species of game including:

- ⇒ Wild Hogs
- ⇒ American Elk
- ⇒ Red Stag
- ⇒ Exotic Deer
- ⇒ Buffalo/Asian Water Buffalo
- ⇒ Catalina Goats
- ⇒ Blackbuck Antelope
- ⇒ Trophy Rams
- ⇒ African Game
- ⇒ and More!

We offer semi-guided and fully-guided hunts on our high fenced property of diverse Texas Hill Country terrain. We have hosted VIP clients, corporate group hunts and many other events.



Located in the heart of the Texas Hill Country, *DB Hunting Ranch* is one of the premier game ranches in Central Texas. Our ranch is a high fenced, large acreage property which remains in operation year round, seven days a week in most cases, and feature a wide variety of game.



Overnight Accommodations



Traveling from out of town? Our cabin is outfitted with all the amenities you need for an overnight stay with us in our hunting camp.

GARQUEST Lobby Card Designed by Author



***Saving Game Fish, One Trash
Fish at a Time...***



Local and Long-Distance Trips
Families Welcome!
Hotel Pick-Up Service Available for Visitors!



Website
www.GARQUEST.com
Phone Number
(254) 931-3474
E-mail
garquest@aol.com



EXPERIENCE THE BEST BOWFISHING IN AMERICA WITH GARQUEST!



***Local Trips starting at \$100 per Person/4-Hour Trip**
***Groups up to 4 people per trip**
***All Equipment Provided. Beginners Welcome!**
***Large Custom Bowfishing Boat & Lighting System**



Branded Merchandise

Most established guide services have some merchandise items branded with their logos. I am including examples of a few ideas used by some of my clients. Low cost examples of “merch” you can give away to customers are stickers, koozies, coffee mugs, cold drink tumblers, pens, notepads, and more. The idea you are looking for when picking a product is finding something of reasonable and practical value that will keep your business branding in front of your customers after they go home. The more they remember you and the good experience they had with you, the more inclined they usually are to come back and see you again. There are several regional and national screen printing and promotional item companies who can help you here. My suggestion is to only do business with companies who are used to pumping out large quantities of quality products. The quality and value of what you send home with someone is a representation of your business. Keep in mind that, in most cases at least, the more volume of product you purchase, the lower your cost. If you plan to give an item to every customer who books a trip with you or prospective customers you see at trade shows and other outlets, follow the old rule of “buy em’ cheap and stack em’ deep!”

Another option is to produce branded merchandise that is more expensive in cost and value, such as T-Shirts, Hoodies, Hats, and other apparel or even other types of items. You can give these products to some of your Pro-Staff and favorite clients and even consider selling it through your website. From my experience with online sales of guide and outfitter branded merchandise, don’t count on making a full-time income selling it. However, it is nice to offer your clients the option of purchasing this product, whether in the physical area of where you met your clients on a trip or on your website through an e-commerce payment system.



Advertising on Free or Low-Cost Platforms

One of the ways I got started with advertising for outdoor businesses was promoting the businesses I represented on forums and social media sites like Facebook pages and groups. In the hunting and fishing communities, for instance, there are many message forums such as the Texas Hunting Forum (www.texashuntingforum.com) or social media pages focusing on niche markets or categories. Many will allow you to post specials or otherwise advertise your business for free. One of the most crucial things I advise businesses to do is to plug their business into the bottom signature section. Post on different topics, where appropriate, often and you will have a passive marketing message without coming across as “selling” anything. There have been forums that I have flat out refused to join or be a part of for different reasons. Most of the time it is because I cannot stand the armchair quarterbacking that goes on sometimes. Your mileage may vary but certainly consider choosing where you promote wisely. Some forums will require you to become a sponsor and pay for advertising on their forum. This is not a bad option either as you will be able to host a banner ad and promote your business to members and visitors to the forum 24 hours a day. In any case, what you are looking for is a qualified audience.

Texas Hunting Forum has been more than gracious in allowing me to promote businesses and products on their site but, like most gracious hosts, many people take advantage of this and “top list” their post by adding content or other posts to them to bump the posting up to the top of the page. THF has rules in place to prevent from businesses abusing this privilege and I recommend, for the good of all, that everyone adhere to them. Whatever you do, don’t be “that guy”. I know of several guide services who have shady reputations because of the way they handle themselves on forums like these.

Other forums such as Texas Bowhunter (www.texasbowhuter.com) are very popular but have a zero tolerance of anyone promoting their business in any way whatsoever without being a paid sponsor. The nice part about forums like these, however, is that many of the members are usually also members on other forums. My recommendation is to maximize the free promotion first and approach the paid advertising later. Using a forum like THF, I have helped businesses grow and prosper for no out-of-pocket cost. The only consideration you have to apply here is consistency and dedication. When it’s a free service and many other competing services have the same chance that you do, you must stand out from the pack and constantly work to be in front of people who are making buying decisions for services like the ones you are offering.



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Advertisement

INTRODUCTION

Forums	Threads	Posts	Last Post
News & Announcements (4 viewing) Moderator: Big Orn, J.P. Greeson, Larry Bozka, TreeBass Subforums: Larry Bozka's Outdoor Blog	239	695	Re: Lifetime Membership to... (donswin) - Today at 04:13 PM
Trading Post - Swap - Classifieds (381 viewing) Moderator: Big Orn, BOBO the Clown, Dave Speer, HighTechRedneck, Jeh7mmmag, JustWingem, RWH24, sig226fan (Rguns.com), TreeBass, bxcornhusker, Txkiller Subforums: non-hunting CLASSIFIEDS, Firearms Sales, Trades and Gunsmithing	88039	727571	WTS Barnett ghost 400 (bw94) - 1 minute 38 seconds ago
Photos (228 viewing) Please show respect to the animals you harvest when taking a photo. Moderator: Big Orn, BOBO the Clown, Dave Speer, Jeh7mmmag, JustWingem, RWH24, sig226fan (Rguns.com), Stan Browning, TreeBass, bxcornhusker, Txkiller	27734	526211	Re: for all you fishermen ... (Southtexas36) - 10 minutes 59 seconds ago

IN THE FIELD

Forums	Threads	Posts	Last Post
Open Hunting Discussion (231 viewing) Moderator: Big Orn, BOBO the Clown, Dave Speer, HighTechRedneck, Jeh7mmmag, JustWingem, RWH24, sig226fan (Rguns.com), TreeBass, bxcornhusker, Txkiller	15525	281433	Re: Military Hunt (uvpigmeet) - 6 minutes 52 seconds ago
Deer Hunting (254 viewing) whitetail, mule, hybrids	46388	371488	burlap smell. will it spoo...

Discount Deal Promotions

A marketing platform that has recently been popularized with the use of e-mail marketing and exposure on the internet are discount savings websites such as Groupon or Living Social. These are places people go to find a discount on something they plan to use or an event they plan to do in the future. Most everyone enjoys saving money and this is one of the main attractions to websites like these. A guide I closely work with recently brought me in to advise him on doing a special package deal on Living Social and a local website affiliated with the regional newspaper of his area. His goal was to only offer fishing trips from Sunday through Thursday, since his busiest times were weekends and he needed more business during the weekdays. The way most services like this work is that you sell a trip for a set discounted cost and the service takes a percentage of the gross sales. In trade for this, you receive marketing exposure to a new audience and new business. This was not a long term marketing platform for the guide who used it but he profited between \$800 to \$1000 both times he did it and he only ran specials during his slowest months of the year to keep the home fires burning and the lights on in regards to his business.

No-Cost Platforms

Another platform to consider is free community posting websites such as Craigslist (www.craigslist.org). The exposure is great on these but keep in mind that you are marketing to the general masses and many of them may not like or understand what you do. While listing hunting or fishing packages is usually free and permissible, the competition is sometimes high in certain areas with many guide services competing for the same audience. That being the case, expect your posts to get flagged and removed and don't get frustrated when they do. The cause of this could be people who want to keep hunting, fishing, or other outdoor activities off of the website or even your competitors trying to bump you out of the running. It is normal and to be expected. Dust yourself off and post again. Stay in the fight; it is worth it. Keep in mind that, much like public transportation, public posting forums like these

have every walk of life on them due to the traffic and the fact that everyone gets a ride for free on them. Don't worry as much about what your competition is saying or doing on competing posts but be excellent in what you do and always take the high road. The cream really always does rise up to the top.

Your postings need to be clear, to the point, and compelling enough to get people to contact you for further information or to book. You want to close a sale as quickly as possible before they make a decision to go with someone else or to not buy at all.

When I post, I am making the point that I am very in-demand. Since it is a forum that I frequently visit but am not monitoring every day, I make it a point for people to contact me directly via private messaging through the forum or by phone. This establishes the precedent that my time is at high demand but we will give the personal service to people who are interested. I never want to appear as if I am "waiting by the phone" for people to call. The more in demand I appear, the more popular I appear and that is the image I want to present to the viewers on here. Adding a note at the end of your post such as "Currently booked through the end of this month" or "Now booking for next month" also add a sense of urgency to contact you and give you the appearance that business is good and the phone is blowing up. You still want to be approachable and make your contact information clear and easy to access but never appear too eager to put business on the books, even if that is the situation.

Outdoor TV Shows

The outdoor industry has many outdoorsmen with established and well-known outdoor shows as well as shows which are just getting started or that are picking up momentum. I advise outdoor TV shows to reach out to guide services and outfitters to form a mutually beneficial relationship. I would advise you likewise as this can be a very inexpensive promotion for your business. Outdoor shows need variety in where they travel and film and outfitters and guides usually welcome the exposure these shows can provide in return.

The thing to look for in outdoor shows is their audience and exposure on where they air, even if it is just on Web TV. In the past, only major network TV shows were considered to be of value but with the advent of technology, mobile devices, and the internet, this trend is changing rapidly. As long as the production value is good and the end product looks as professional as something you would see on TV, consider shows that are on smaller regional networks and even Web TV only shows when you are looking at partnership possibilities. Also see what kind of sponsors they represent and see if their goals and mission line up with yours. Be selective and cautious. Ask to see some of their full shows or segments of what they have produced. As I often say, nothing comes for free in this world the outdoor industry is no different. You are in business to stay in business and are most likely looking for ways to increase market reach and exposure for little to no cost or no cost if possible. TV shows, however large or small, have a natural draw to guides and outfitters as it costs more than most people think about when it comes to air on national or even regional traditional network TV. That being the case, outdoor shows are usually looking for businesses like yours. Don't be afraid to look for them and partner with them as well.

If you want to promote your business with outdoor shows on the "Big Three" traditional TV networks (The Outdoor Channel, Pursuit Channel, and Sportsmans Channel) remember that their shows usually have huge bills to pay with

the cost ranging from \$10,000 to \$250,000 or even more to air on these and other similar channels. You will have to weigh if the cost is worthy of the exposure. Keep in mind that thousands of customers are dumping cable and satellite services every month due to personal household expenses, loss of interest, or other factors. Advertising by becoming a money sponsor on shows airing on the major traditional TV networks is by no means a guarantee that you will get a return on your investment. I am not discouraging you from spending marketing dollars this way and many of the TV shows I work with might hunt me down for suggesting such a thing since I work in that market as well, but I think it is prudent to weigh your options and consider your return from investing.

One thing you should require from shows who work with you, especially for free or a reduced cost in trade for promotion, is prominent exposure of your contact info during or at the end of their program or segment featuring your info. Invite them to interview you and tell your story of how you got started with your business and what your mission is in the outdoor industry. I remind outdoor TV shows that there is no free lunch in working with anyone. Everyone involved in sales and marketing of any kind in the outdoor industry has a proverbial dog in the hunt. You want to give TV shows the best platform for filming a good show featuring you and they need to give you adequate exposure in return.

Outdoor Radio Shows

My home city of Austin alone has a few outdoor-themed radio shows. Many of these come on during the weekends and typically in the early morning or late afternoon. Most are hosted on news talk, country music, or sports talk radio stations. One of my favorite among these shows is done by Ken Milam, who is a veteran fishing guide and wonderful radio show host. I listen to his show from 6am-8pm every Saturday and Sunday as he interviews several guides, outfitters, and other experts on a variety of subjects. Most shows like these are very approachable and a free way to plug your business as part of providing value for that show. Most guides simply call in and give a report of their area as well as their contact information so listeners can contact them.

Client Testimonials and Public Relations

Client testimonials are some of the most powerful marketing tools you can use and you can use them in many places. Invite clients to post a review of your service on local and regional hunting or fishing forums. Get your message out there through them. It is no secret that Word-of-Mouth advertising remains one of the best marketing tools today. Some guides and outfitters have built and maintained their business over the years on this alone. One of the best stories on testimonials I recently heard was about a home remodeler who was giving an estimate to a potential customer's home. While he went back out to his truck, he left this potential client a four page single-spaced document that was full of customer testimonials. It was hard to argue that he was one of the best services for his market in the area. He had irrefutable proof from past customers who have worked with him that he knew what he was doing and had earned the right for their business. It was hard to argue otherwise. In the same way, you have to earn this from your current clients to be able to sell it to your prospective future clients.

Video Testimonials

One of the most effective tools in marketing, aside from written testimonials and general Word-of-Mouth advertising, is video testimonials. The reason is simple. You can put a face with the name of the person and it adds credibility that a real person is behind the positive review of your business. A video platform also allows you to see the expression and enthusiasm of the client. I don't see enough guides and outfitters doing video testimonials. They are really easy to record and could be as easy as asking a couple of short questions after a successful guide trip or other event you hosted for them. This is usually when clients are the most excited about their time with you and it is not hard to get them to talk about their experience and your business as it will be fresh on their mind. Even if you use a Smartphone or small camcorder with a decent external microphone to record these with, what you are doing is creating more irrefutable evidence that you are one of the best and most qualified businesses available on the market today. Let your customers do the selling for you here. Most of the time, they will do a wonderful job of making a positive impression and you can always post the videos you like the best if you get several of them in a short period of time.

Marketing the Smart Way and Staying on a Budget

Email List/Newsletters

One of the best ways I have seen guides and outfitters stay in touch with their current or potential clients is newsletters and social media. One guide in particular that I have fished with on the Texas Gulf Coast has a phenomenal newsletter he sends out quarterly which covers fishing reports, pictures of successful fishing trips, and invitation for past clients or anyone else who has opted in to receive this newsletter to call and book a trip with him. There is always an invitation at the end of each newsletter for his lodge to “Come home when you can!” This is the kind of marketing that I love to see and it works. The best way to build a newsletter list is to give something of value away. This might be something as simple as a free or discounted trip, where you pick one subscriber out of the list, or a free e-book report, which could be as simple as text document converted into a PDF file, of your top fishing or hunting secrets. You can send a free report to everyone on your subscription list just for opting-in and subscribing to your newsletter. A marketing tag line for something like this might read, “Join our Newsletter and Get our Free Report on the Top 5 Fishing Tips” or “Join our Newsletter and Get a Free List of the Biggest Mistakes Hunters Make in the Field.” This is a good way to build an audience quickly. People don’t want to miss out on something that can help them in their next outdoor adventure, whether it is on their own or with you. This is especially true if it is free information. As a result of this, you have a list of people who have “opted in” to hear your message. This is a form of permission marketing. People are subscribing to your message. You are not another uninvited email in their inbox. You are more than a guide service or outfitter in this realm as you serve as a valuable resource to helping them. There are several low cost subscriber email services available on the market today. I do not have one in particular I recommend but the main thing you want to look for is option to opt-in and unsubscribe option. Consider doing a report or newsletter intermediately to your list, every month or three months. You just want a light touch with current and prospective clients to remind them you are alive and well. Treat your e-mails like a mini website by posting some pictures of recent trips, specials, testimonials, links to videos you have made or other valuable and attractive information. And be sure not to send out too many e-mails too often. You want to just stay in front of an audience in a passive manner with a platform like this.

Social Media Promotion

There are several social media websites available today and it is no secret that they are a popular and inexpensive way to promote your business. I will not mention any social media platforms by name as the most popular ones seem to change in our trending culture quickly. The main things to consider are plugging your website and contact information. Upload lots of pictures and videos where you can. Many of my clients upload content like this the minute the trip is over and the clients are on their way back home. Just make sure you have your clients’ permission to use their pictures online for your promotional use. I have had some rather high-maintenance clients who have taken trophy or record-book animals who had a long list of rules I had to follow if I used their images in promotional material. My view on this is that it is not worth the trouble. Most people will be fine with you using pictures or videos of themselves as it is a bragging right for them to share with your audience. The main rule with social media

is to keep it fresh and promote with it. Link it back to your website and put your social media logos on business cards and other marketing material. You can also advertise rather inexpensively on many of these platforms and even target specific demographics based on age, gender, location, extra-curricular interests, and more. It really is an amazing target marketing platform.

Websites

I started building websites back in the late 1990's and, several years ago, started building them for outfitters and guides. The sad part of many website builders and designers are that, like any other realm of service providers, many will be unreliable and some will charge you a fee and not follow through on what they promised. I started Warncke Enterprises out of the need for outdoor industry small businesses needing someone to pick up the pieces of the previous "website guy" they used. In other cases, many businesses I started working with didn't have the budget to pay for a big company or full-time professional to build them a website and knew nothing about how they work or what goes into making a good one. In more cases than not, people I started working for didn't have the time, let alone the desire, to learn the basics of the world of websites.

Plain and simple, a website should be a sort of formless business card. It is a tool that represents you and your business 24 hours a day, year round, both passively and actively. In working with several guides and outfitters, many of which have their own websites designed and built from other sources, it surprises me how little thought goes into the layout and design of what they are presenting to potential clients. You never get another chance to make a first impression. Your website doesn't have to be fancy. Most of the ones I build from scratch are built using a very simple HTML builder and utilize the guides logo, basic information on what is offered and prices, pictures, videos, and contact information.

The main focus here is making it easy to convert visitors into customers and having enough content to keep them coming back to see what you have been up to lately. One of the easiest ways to keep fresh content on your website is to use a slideshow program or another platform to showcase pictures from recent trips. Most visitors love to see what has been harvested or caught on recent trips. Social media platforms are also a great place to do this but keep in mind that the main goal of any marketing is to drive potential clients to your website or social media in an effort to close a sale with them. Make this your focus when you are building or editing your website.

Example of the Landing Page of Garquest Bowfishing Adventures



On this website, notice we are concentrating on why someone wants to go bowfishing. The phone number to call and book a trip is always at the top right hand corner of each page and the social media link is prominent. While it isn't possible to show you here, the main banner at www.garquest.com is a rotating slideshow which transitions through 100 pictures on a rotation. On the **Customer Catches** page, there is a slideshow with over 300 pictures which is easy to navigate and is updated often. For the slideshow, I use a basic program named Flash Banner Creator (www.flashbanercreator.com). The only drawback with using flash software like this is that some mobile devices cannot view the slideshow so having some static pictures that are not part of a slideshow is another consideration.

Example of the Landing Page of DB Hunting Ranch



Notice on this website, which can be found at www.dbhunting.com, that a brief description of where the ranch is located, what is available to hunt, and other basic info, along with social media links are all part of the top section of the page. While neither of these websites are super fancy, both were built using a simple HTML program, the layout is clean and easy to read and the overall appearance is attractive.

Blogging, Writing or Contributing to Print or Online Media

Being an outdoor writer lends well to my recommendation to communicate through articles, blogs, or other platforms where you will get in front of the eyes of potential clients. One of the services I provide for, Texas Fish & Game Magazine, is contributing to their "Hotspots" report in their magazine, both in print and online, as well as on their website which is free to the public. This is an opportunity for fishing guides to promote their business for no cost and provide valuable information for anglers on Texas lakes. I often remind guides that I work with that you don't have to give away your best fishing spots, just a general area where people can find fish, what lures or bait you are using, and some tips for catching fish. A platform like this is free for the guide and profitable for the writer. This is a very effective way to promote your business.

Another avenue is to contact an established writer of an outdoor magazine and invite them on a free or reduced

cost trip in trade for them featuring you in an upcoming magazine article. This is a very inexpensive way to get exposure for your business and build relationships with people who have influence in the industry. Approach outdoor writers in local or regional magazines in your area at first and see if they need a new feature story. Outdoor writers are usually very easy to get in touch with through e-mail. As a guide or outfitting business, you have established yourself as an expert in your field by your profession. Your opinion counts and people like to hear it. This is especially true in situations where a controversial issue arises. Regional and national magazines are always on the search for the next stories for their yearly editorial calendar. I recently had a guide contact me wanting our magazine to do a feature story on the plan to introduce grass carp into a local Central Texas area lake. This is a rather controversial issue since a lake in East Texas experienced a dramatic effect on the lake structure that left the bass fishing opportunities decimated. This was a very hot button issue for our area and a perfect platform to plug in a guide service spokesperson as an expert on the ecosystem of a lake. In other words, it's another way to get your name and business in front of people without "advertizing". Our executive editor love unique and hot button issues. Furthermore, as an outdoor writer, my goal in what I write is to also promote my client's businesses as part of the stories I submit. Some recent queries I submitted to the magazine I work with were:

The Case for Bowfishing... – Why the LCRA has two pages of restrictions for bowfishing but reasonable regulations for traditional fishermen.

Are you Gonna Eat That? – Little known culinary treasures in our fields and waters that make pretty tasty table-fare.

What Are We Teaching the Next Generation? – Why a positive attitude and education is crucial to our next generation of outdoorsmen.

Some of these queries were inspired from other articles I have already written for other outlets. The reason I included them here is to give you some ideas of what magazines like to see when they are looking for content. Again, even if you are not a writer, you can partner with someone who is, as their "resident expert" on the water or in the field where you run your business and work as a team promoting each other. I have made many such partnerships with several businesses and my articles are featured as part of their websites where there is a fit for the content. Have I mentioned that networking is awesome?

Another idea is to start writing or contributing your own content to promote your business. If you are not a writer, seek a good one to help you out. There are numerous outdoor writers, many of which who are just starting out, looking for new content to write on and new people to work with like you. This is another opportunity for you to trade a free or reduced cost trip for a write up in an upcoming project the writer is working on. The main thing to look for when seeking out a freelance writer is the scope of their audience. If they are a blogger, what does their following and audience like? If they write for websites or other content platforms, like I do, how many people are reading their content and where are they located geographically? Are they good at their skill or do they still need some refining in their craft? These are good questions to ask when building this kind of relationship. Your main focus should be on the writer's professionalism and care to detail. You only want high caliber people representing you. This may come at a higher cost up front but the end result will be worth it to you in the long run.

Also consider posting content on your website to help prospective or current clients in their own outdoor adventures. Fishing tips, lake reports, hunting tactics, and other information is an invaluable tool to share with visitors to your website. The more value you provide, the more people will come back to visit you and want to learn more about who you are and what you are doing with your business.

Print and Online Advertising

Outdoor magazines and websites as well as Web TV Platforms are affordable and effective places to spend your marketing dollars to do your own advertising campaigns. When you approach any of these platforms, be sure that you know all of the terms, conditions, and what you are ultimately signing up for in return for what you are receiving. Many of my customers call me after receiving an e-mail from some company based in India who promised them first page Google search rankings with their SEO (Search Engine Optimization) services. I only recommend working with well established companies and platforms with a long and seasoned track record. The money you dedicate to paying for advertising, should you choose to spend it, should go where it counts and that should be the best and most cost effective places where potential clients will see you. One of my clients put an advertisement in the back of a major regional trophy hunting magazine in Texas at a cost of almost \$1000 and received three “tire-kicker” phone calls and booked one hunt from the exposure. That is not a good return on investment for the amount of money he spent. I advise businesses who want to advertise in print media to pay the extra money and buy an advertisement spot in the core of the magazine where it will be seen by more readers rather than in the back of the classifieds section. In advertising, you do get what you pay for, as you do in most things in life. However, that does not mean that the best advertising has to be ridiculously expensive.

Video Promotion

Marty McIntyre’s need for video editing services with his guide service, Garquest Bowfishing Adventures, was the catalyst for me learning how to edit and produce videos. He had some awesome footage of bowfishing trips he had guided and had filmed all of it with a small Cannon Vixia HD camera and a tripod. He built an elevated platform over the center console of his boat and had a friend of his run the camera. What he had was raw footage and he needed someone who could produce promo videos from that content for his website and social media platforms. That was where I came in. After several videos, he started learning to edit for himself. Later on, to save running a separate camera and the need for an additional person to run it, he started to use GoPro cameras and film some awesome point-of-view footage from different angles ranging from his boat to wearing the camera on a headlamp-style mount.

In any case, you want to record stable and good quality footage. Where possible use an HD camera as the quality is sharper, and consider using a series 10 SD card for recording. They are the highest grade of quality when it comes to recording video. HD footage will take up more space than SD recording so get a 16-32GB card. The next thing you will need is a good video editor. If video editing is not your strong point, and here again it usually isn’t for most people in this business, hire someone who can. This doesn’t have to cost you money out of pocket. Find a video editor you can trade a trip or two with and work something out with them between your services and maybe a little

money on the side, depending on their needs. I started out in the industry strictly with a barter and trade business and built it from there just simply providing services for guides and outfitters in need of them.

Start a channel on YouTube or other popular streaming media website and reference it in your printed marketing material. People love to watch videos and see pictures of what you are doing. So, as an addition to your website, consider making a video section and embedding your videos in your website where people can easily watch them.

Client Photo Promotion

Most of us are familiar with fishing guide photos which include the guide service's contact info in the background. Some guides also use these "brag boards" which advertise a local bait shop or other business as cooperative with other fishing guides. Why more fishing guides and even hunting ranches and outfitters don't do this idea is amazing to me. While some clients may prefer not to have a plug for the guide service business they use be a part of their photos at the end of the trip, most understand that it is part of the deal when they use a business like this. If you don't already have a brag board set up by your cleaning station, ask a sign shop for an estimate or build a platform on your own and add a sign.

Another option for a hunting ranch or outfitting business, for example, might be to put signage around where your clients take photos, such as by the skinning racks of a hunting ranch. If you are guiding hunts in the great wide open, where signage isn't possible, adding your contact information or businesses' logo into a client's photo, if you are doing the photography is a good option. This is especially true when you are promoting in social media. It amazes me that most hunting ranches and outfitters do little to promote their business through photos with their clients. This is easy and effective marketing that can set you ahead of the pack of other businesses around you.

Beat That Pavement!

Prospecting to Local Retail Businesses

Here's my card! As we have talked about so far, and it goes without saying, having a professional looking business card for your business is a crucial tool for bringing clients back to you and growing your business by reaching out to new customers. One of the best and inexpensive ways to market your business is to visit your local outdoor or sporting goods retailers, especially the smaller privately owned retail shops. Bake some cookies, buy some donuts, or bring another type of desirable food with you and introduce yourself. You want to try to catch the store in a slower business mode when a casual conversation can take place and they can learn more about you and what you offer as part of your business platform. Bring a stack of business cards or your brochures with you and ask to leave them on the counter. Most smaller retail stores have a bulletin board or counter space just for this purpose. What you really want to accomplish here is to be the FIRST recommendation of the store representatives. Since the employees of these store will see hundreds of people in a given week, let them know who you are, what you do, and seek to earn their favor. Make a clear and focused introduction and let them know your intentions. You want them to mention you at every opportunity possible. These outdoor businesses get asked lots of questions and usually among them are, "Do you know of any good places to hunt or fish?" or "Who would you recommend for my next trip?" This is a highly effective method that can work for you and, best of all, it's very inexpensive, passive and residual marketing. Visit the stores you keep your cards in on a regular basis and make sure they are stocked with your information. Leave brochures if there is room. You don't want to be skimpy here. It is very important to remember to stay in front of those who you work with in a context like this. Bring them a surprise cookie or donut delivery often and remind them why they want to recommend you to their customers when they are asked about local guides and outfitters. It is important to remember to remind people, especially in this realm, why they want to recommend you and how you stand head and shoulders above the other guides and outfitters in the area. Otherwise, they may soon forget you if another business comes in and does a better job of making a lasting impression on them. You want to stay in front of the competition by staying in the minds and hearts of your prospective clients and those who carry influence in the industry. A mistake most guides and outfitters make in this area is not following up and staying in contact with the retail businesses that support them.

Another idea is to work a referral program out with outdoor businesses that cater to the outdoorsman. I have worked deals like this for many different clients. An example of this kind of agreement is that if a retail store refers a set amount of customers to you during a certain period or even cumulatively over an evergreen period, you give them a trip for free or a deep discount on a hunting or fishing package that they can take or give to an employee. Many of these retail stores will also put together hunting or fishing parties that they lead and ask for a group discount for sending you the business. As long as it is favorable to you, consider it. You never know what new clients may lead you to in the way of larger clients, corporate trips, or even more clients like themselves.

What About The Big Box Retailers?

Larger retail store such as Cabela's, Gander Mountain, Bass Pro Shops, and more will be harder to approach with this idea. Many of them have their own outfitting programs with national and local outfitters but most of them do offer another way for you to promote your business and be of service to them. I recently attended an event called Captain's Day as a Pro-Staff for GARQUEST. The event served two purposes for Cabela's and for the guides and outfitters who attended. The store was able to draw in an audience to the store on Saturday and Sunday. This provided more of a buying climate for the store as most people who were drawn in would most likely buy something while they were there. The customers would also be able to ask the experts for some valuable advice while they were there. For the guides, the benefits were obvious. While they couldn't book any trips as part of the rules with the store since Cabela's already had a program set up for that, they could hand out business cards, brochures, and any sample items they brought to anyone who came by. One guide I was next to had a youth summer camp he hosted. Another guide had a lake map and shared some of his best fishing practices and areas he worked on the lake during different times of the year.

What Marty did as a part of this event was set up a bowfishing demonstration at the front entrance of his store and worked it with another Pro-Staff member. This was basically his boat set up over a large portable pool with a 3D Long-nose Gar target. He put a blunt tip on the arrow for safety and had around 300 customers of the store come through his area and give bowfishing a try. His branding, logos, website address, and phone number were all visibly represented and provided great exposure. At the back table with the other fishing guides, which I staffed, I had videos running on a loop and pictures of trophy fish that were taken with bowfishing gear on Garquest trips. I was handing out stickers, business cards, koozies, and other branded merchandise to anyone who expressed interest in learning more about this guide service. During the middle of the day, Marty, along with several other guides, hosted a seminar about bowfishing and the equipment to use in getting started. This was an extra draw for customers in the store to stay there and buy something he recommended from Cabela's on the way out. This event alone helped Marty book several trips shortly after the event because of the exposure.

Sometimes major retailers will seek guides out for events like this, but chances to be a part of these kinds of events are many times easier if you are proactive in contacting the marketing director or event coordinator of the store to let them know who you are first. Again, being proactive is the key here. Make sure they have your contact info and follow up with them often. These key people are many times overwhelmed with events they have to book and attend inside and outside of the store but you are one of the target people they are after and you can earn their favor quickly just by staying in contact with them early and often. They need your expertise and knowledge to draw customers into their store and you need the exposure for your business in return. Every event I have been a part of like the one at Cabela's has been great. They usually give all of the experts participating in the event an in-store coupon, a free lunch, and other goodies to make you feel right at home. I know I sure feel extra special when a store like Cabela's expresses that kind of care and hospitality to making sure I am taken care of while spending the day or weekend with them at an event.

Capitan's Day Event at Cabela's in Buda, Texas



Sponsor Non-Profit Organizations

Seek out local non-profit organizations who work in or with the outdoor industry or even others who might be a good fit for your business. I personally belong to and promote organizations such as Crosswater Outfitters (www.crosswateroutfitters.com), which is a wounded warriors organization based in Central Texas. They work with soldiers and their families through an organization connected to Fort Hood (one of the largest military bases in the world) helping soldiers return to civilian life after service in the US Army. CWO introduces soldiers and their families to the Gospel and message of God through Jesus Christ and they do this through jug fishing for catfish on a three day weekend. In a recent article series titled, "Are You Gonna Eat That?" I featured a CWO event I attended as a boat deckhand, fish cleaner, and musician. These are some of the many roles I play in service to this organization. I wrote about running low on catching catfish during the early part of our event and catching and eating long-nose Gar as a supplement. This both featured a point that I was writing about in the article on eating lesser desired wild game and fish and also promoted CWO. This is a good example of what can be accomplished with a partnership like this.

As a guide or outfitter, the opportunities for you in a setting like this are pretty obvious. We always need fishing guides and other reliable men with boats at our events. Aside from that, as I mentioned in my roles above, there are

more than a few other ways to pitch in as well. Sponsorships in organizations like this are easy to gain in return for serving the needs of the organization at events and helping them along the way to grow and prosper. If you serve them well, in whatever way possible, they will be of great value to you in return.

The Author at CWO Event with a Soldier and His Daughter (Left) and Boat Captain (Right)



Another organization I belong to is Hill Country Bowhunters in Central Texas (www.hillcountrybowhunters.com). The main focus of this organization is to promote and encourage youth to get involved with the outdoors with an emphasis on archery and bowhunting. Recently, in a part of the hunting show I co-host I interviewed the president of Hill Country Bowhunters about the importance of 3D archery clubs for families and friends. Their purpose is to unite people together for fun outdoor activities as well as to promote hunting and archery. One of the main focuses of HCB is on youth hunters, our next generation. Everyone wins in a partnership like this. I also work as a middle man between the clients I serve and non-profit organizations to help cross-promote each other. For example, the cost to be a sponsor for Hill Country Bowhunters is \$100 or more worth of donations for the annual Fun Shoot which is held every September before the opening weekend of whitetail deer archery season. Sponsors get a tax write-off

for what they donate and can also promote their service at the event and they are also featured year-round on the HCB website. On the other side, it is a good idea to share what non-profits you are supporting as part of your business on your own website. This is just good public relations work. When prospective clients see that you are supporting local and national non-profits, they will usually tend to favor you versus other businesses that just seem to be in the market for a client's money and closing the deal on booking their next trip. This is again another way to set yourself apart from the pack and take a competitive advantage.

While you don't want to be overrun by non-profit organizations and may not be able to donate to all of them who ask you to donate, at least approach the organizations you want to work with or invite the ones you like the most to approach you about partnering in some way. You never know the audience this type of advertising will ultimately reach.

Garquest Donation Certificate Example for HCB



GIFT CERTIFICATE

Redeemable for

**One 4-hour Guided Bowfishing
Adventure on a local Bell County Lake**

**Includes Two Adults or
One Adult and one Youth**

Trip Valued at \$200.00

Expiration Date: January 20th, 2014

**Please call us at your convenience to
book your trip with us!**

Proud Sponsor of the



Code: HBC2013 - Authorized by Dustin Warncke, Garaquest Pro-Staff

The Annual Hill Country Bowhunters "Fun Shoot" Silent Auction and other Events



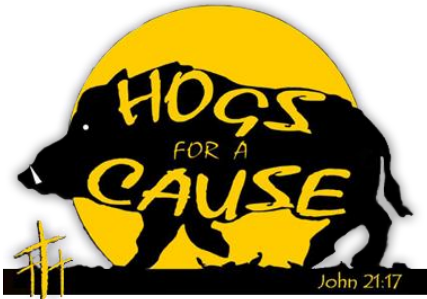
The Author at a “Kid’s Day Out” Youth Event in Burnet, Texas with HCB





Not only is joining organizations like these beneficial to your own outdoor industry resume as well as having their own intrinsic benefits, non-profit organizations also welcome reciprocal marketing exposure and you can help them here. They may not have a lot to offer in return as many struggle with money and expenses, but, as we covered, the value you can provide them and the exposure to clients about your work with non-profits is powerful.

Examples of Non-Profit Organizations



I realize that I am more ambitious and use networking far more than most people but I have a success story in many areas of the outdoor industry as a result. This didn't happen by luck or privileges afforded to me by anyone besides the grace of God. I started with nothing, on the outside looking in, and I worked for every bit of the success I currently enjoy in the industry. As Andy Rooney once said, "Opportunities are never lost; Someone will always take the ones you miss..." This works both ways. As with everything else in life, if you want the opportunity to come to you, pursue after it first. Don't expect great opportunities and partnerships with others in the outdoor industry to fall at your front door on their own. I know many disappointed business owners who still can't grasp the concept of being proactive and assertive with what they want to accomplish.

The Road is Long...But it's Worth it.

In this section, I want to summarize some important points to leave you from this book. Thank you for reading this resource and I hope I have helped you with some valuable advice in your future endeavors.

Be enthusiastic. No matter what kind of personality traits you possess, you can always put energy and enthusiasm into who you are and express passion for what you do. Now you don't want to go over the top here and come off as "faking it" but you want to put your best foot forward. Many people I meet in this industry are pretty bland and very often not very interesting. It is an industry where, unless you are a show host or in a sales market, you don't have to be on your A-Game when you are meeting new people or forming new relationships.

One of my best stories in the industry goes back to the first SHOT Show I attended. I had set up a meeting with a major knife sponsor and the rest of my team, who was there earlier than me, stopped by to confirm their booth location and who we would be meeting with. When this sponsor representative first met the team of guys her first question was, "Which one of you is Dustin?" When they told her that I was on my way, she commented, "Man, that guy is tenacious!" Why yes, I am. She meant this as a compliment. I bring an enthusiastic, energetic, and persistent attitude into everything I do in this industry. I stand out from other people who do what I do for those reasons and many more. I don't expect my accomplishments or even my own ego to lead the way. I serve people first, then ask for something in return after I have proven my worth to them. People enjoy other people who are interested in them and what they do. They also enjoy an attitude of gratitude and people who are transparent and not hard to figure out. Personally, I have nothing to hide. I want them to see that. I want to make the best impression on them as possible and be memorable the next time they think of me in future communications. This attitude alone will win you far more victories with meeting new people and networking that in turn will help you grow in the future.

Find subtle ways to make gratuity an important factor to your clients. I often use a statement on my customers' websites and brochures such as, "Gratuity is not included in pricing is humbly and gratefully appreciated. Our guides and staff work hard and a 20% gratuity for your hunt is a nice consideration." Just keep it low-key. My thought, probably along with yours, is that a job well done deserves an extra thank you gift and I am never afraid to make that an option to the clients of my customers. Some people just need to be reminded in a subtle way through your business platform that tipping is acceptable and encouraged.

To set yourself apart from the pack, you have to have content as good, if not better, as what has been done by other guides and outfitters in the past. Have a sharp image, a powerful logo, a professional website and other media, and an excellent overall image.

As the old saying goes, "If you're green, you're growing, if you're ripe, you rot." I have seen more than a few businesses in this industry crash and burn because they thought they had it made in the shade and that they "had arrived". The learning and growing process should never stop. The world is changing too quickly and I have seen

some tragic cases of what happens when people, teams, and businesses don't embrace that change and adapt to new circumstances. If you are still breathing air, there is still time to make a difference in this world. You were put here for a purpose. What is your message in this life and goal for your business? Never forget that.

Treat your clients, sponsors, members of your team, and other networking connections in the industry well and they will take care of you. Communicate with your sponsors, non-profits, and other supporters often and let them know the ways you have promoted them through your work. If you have their logos posted on your truck, boat, or other places, send them pictures and remind them why they enjoy working with you and vice versa. Chances are that you will earn their favor by simply staying in touch. Make yourself memorable.

Have an attitude of gratitude. Consider practicing principals around the Law of Attraction. Books on the market today such as *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne and *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale didn't get to be best-sellers by accident. While I do not encourage people to go sit in a field and imagine what they want, believing it will come to them without doing any of the hard work to make it happen, I do believe in staying positive and being grateful at all times. One of the affirmations I have talked about on camera as well as in my written articles is the statement, "I am thankful for all that I have had, for all that I have, and for all that I shall have." This is something I learned from *The Power of Positive Thinking*. It is a very powerful statement. I am a very blessed person, you probably are too. The issue is that too many people never take notice of what they have and how blessed they really are to be where they are and have what they have compared to the rest of the world. The truth is that about 80% of our world will never use a cell phone and around one billion people in our world live on \$1 a day and sleep on a dirt floor at night. If you don't believe me, look up those statistics sometime for yourself. We don't have it that bad compared to most of the folks in this world who have really hard problems and circumstances. Clients today also appreciate your humility and gratefulness. There are too many business owners I know of who have "made it big" and are pompous jerks about how wonderful they are and all the good they do for the world. That is a major turn off in my opinion. If you practice gratitude daily, regardless of your belief system or belief of a higher power, you will see your life and circumstances change. I know I have.

Keep working hard, providing for your family and your daily needs, and do a little every day to promote your business. You may already be at the point that you are in business full-time but if you aren't yet, keep working at it until you get there. Build a brand around what you do and create value for yourself by learning new skills and networking with new people.

Keep in mind that you can take tax deductions for trips, meetings, conventions, and other expenses related to your business. At some point, the IRS will put a stop on the tax savings if you do not turn a profit and show an income but, regardless, take the savings in what you pay Uncle Sam where you can and while you can. I personally operate on a pretty small budget but I have learned to produce high quality work using technology and creativity.

Don't go broke promoting your business. It amazes folks when I tell them how little I spend on my hunting and fishing trips because of what I do for people in barter and trade alone. For instance, I work with a taxidermist, hunting ranch, meat processor, and several outdoor product companies. Out-of-Pocket cost for a hunting trip for

me these days, for example? Gas money, a hunting license, and maybe a pit stop on the way to get a snack or a drink. Everything else is done on barter and trade, completely cashless. Not everything in life has to operate on money after all. You can do this as well by finding people who want to do this with you. The deciding factor is if you can provide enough value in return for what you receive with this old world system. Most trades I do come out even more favorably for me and the other party than if I used cash. Use what you have, wherever you are in the process of your business, and grow from there. Start from where you are and do the best and be the best you can using what you have around you. I carry a principle with me that I learned from a leadership class I took many years ago: See what you have, Use what you can, and Do what matters the most.

One of the main reasons I am able to get so much done in such a short amount of time is with the use of technology and automation. The way I like to look at many of my business relationships in the outdoor industry is that I am the “ghost in the machine”. I let technology work for me in every way possible without sacrificing the “human touch” where it is appropriately needed. Websites and 24/7 streaming video are good examples of this. If I can create a resource that can work for me or my clients without me having to be there in person all the time, I can reach a larger audience and help more people at once than I ever could without these tools. This also allows me to spend more time with my family and outdoors filming new content or working with new clients. A recent comment I received on one of my videos I have on YouTube is a good example of this:

Comment on: [Compound Bow and Crossbow Shooting Fundamentals Video](#)

"Dustin, I think you just sold me on the crossbow. I suffered a stroke during heart surgery and I am unable to cock the bow of a compound, BUT the Crossbow will allow me to play.

I greatly appreciate your time and effort in making this video - - well done.

My 13 year old grandson is happy, because gramps will be able to shoot with him.

I live in Washington State, but you have given me yet one more reason to love Texas.

Goin' shoppin', then shootin'..."

That comment really made my day. I did the math on the time that this guy watched my video and at that exact time I was driving home and picking up my son from school. You never know who you will impact in the world in what you do and what you produce. Seek to make a difference. I was using the Barnett Wildcat C5 crossbow from Barnett Crossbows in this video as they are a sponsor of our show. Guess what I did next? That's right. I e-mailed our friends over there:

Mr. Barnett,

I just wanted to share this comment from one of my viewers from my YouTube Channel as it really touched me. This was a long video I did covering fundamentals of shooting a compound and crossbow. I was exclusively (of course!) using my Barnett C5 Wildcat during the Crossbow segment. Here is the comment:

(Comment above was pasted here)

That really made my day. Here is the link to the video if you hadn't seen it before. This one I did last summer before the last one I sent you on the BCX and Wildcat C5 I sent you earlier:

<http://youtu.be/gICy8WoeWP4>

For archery hunting this year, my plan is to switch to the new BCX Carbonlite that you were gracious enough to send me this summer. Thanks again for working with us!

--

Warmest Regards,

Dustin Vaughn Warncke

Marketing Director

Mac & Prowler

These again are light touches and sponsors enjoy seeing what people are saying about what you are doing with their product. This sponsor replied favorably and told me he shared this with his whole team. This is a way to build and strengthen relationships. Notice again, I wasn't "showy" in my message. I simply relayed the comment from the viewer, added some gratefulness for what they recently sent me, and thanked them for working with us.

Along those same lines: Don't forget to share positive comments from your clients or even viewers who happen to come across your website and learn something from you. Here are a few I have included on my personal website. These were posted on my YouTube channel for videos I have made for our TV show over the years. Comments like these could very well come from content you create as a guide or outfitter as well:

Comment on: Dustin's Urban Deer Hunt - Two Bucks in One Day

"Just found your channel, really like what you're doing. Getting into crossbow for the first time. Got a Barnett Jackal coming and was looking for broadheads but you solved that problem. Keep up the good videos."

--

Comment on: [After the Shot - Wounded Wild Game Recovery - Blood Tracking](#)

"Always great to learn more about the sport, especially when it comes to ways to do things smarter and/or safer. I appreciate you sharing your experiences and tips. Thanks!"

--

Comment on: [Buying a Used Rifle - Do's and Don'ts](#)

"Thanks for the tips! I'm purchasing my first gun soon and this was very helpful."

These kind of unsolicited comments add creditability for what you are doing and are something you can easily share with your sponsors and clients.

Play the game to win. While this might sound like a trivial statement, it is one part of my personal mission statement. In whatever I set my mind and attention to, I'm not playing the game to lose. You should live with that same resolve. Don't let this industry or anything else in life eat you alive. I have seen a negative attitude and outlook on the future ruin many outdoor shows, businesses, and even individual people inside and outside of the industry.

Put forward your best effort in the quality of your work. Whether you are guiding, networking, marketing, or any number of things, put your heart into it and work efficiently and effectively with what you have. One individual I work with in the outdoor industry gets so busy that he ends up doing sloppy work sometimes. There are typos on his website and other content has needed attention for some time. Many of his e-mails are also carelessly thrown together without any thought to formatting and proper punctuation. Sloppy and careless work is not acceptable in my opinion. Again, there is no room for it in this industry. I am a perfectionist in some forms of the definition but I care about the end result of what I am producing for my audience more than anything. You will never have a second chance to make a first impression.

Remember, we live in the Golden Age of our time. You can pick the world apart with politics, economics, or a number of other factors but the truth is, this is a good time to be alive and a part of the outdoor industry. Think about it. Even 100 years ago, many of the things we enjoy every day didn't exist. Competition in the outdoor industry and just about any part of our culture has eliminated most of the shady and sub-par products and services from the market. We now have access to rifles and scopes which can make 1,000 plus yard shots as easy as locking in on a target and pulling a trigger. You can look up a topographic map of a lake in a few taps on a Smartphone and even sync it with your GPS in less than a minute. We have crossbows that fire over 400 feet per second, the best in broadheads, ammunition, and other accessories. It is easy to take this for granted and many times we do. I am very grateful every day for all of this and more. The products and equipment I use in the field now are innovations that even my grandparents never dreamed of and they are here. No matter what your experiences in life might be, it is hard to argue that the conveniences and technological advancements we have make living in today's world pretty

awesome.

Get a mentor. As you build your brand and business base, find a mentor who can help you. An ideal mentor for you has been or is currently where you want to be and will share their experiences and advise you as you progress in your ventures. As you gain experience, offer a hand up to someone who is just getting started as well in return. The main goal here is to reach for a hand up for help as well as reach a hand down to someone who needs a hand up from you. The catch is that you have to be able to provide value in both relationships for them to prosper. A good mentor is not afraid to tell you that you are wrong about something or offer suggestions where they are needed. In any case, you don't want a "yes man". My personal mentor and I are both extremely valuable to each other and critical of each other's work. We are not threatened by each other's suggestions and advice and we have a special bond. Most of all the most successful people I know in life, especially in the outdoor industry, can name one or more mentors who have helped them along the way.

Don't get frustrated. In sales and marketing, there will be plenty of times you proverbially stub your toe or a door get's slammed in your face. So what? Grow a thick skin if you don't have one already. You need it in this game. I am better able to grow in the industry and help the industry row as a whole if I start working with small businesses and start-up companies who are blazing new trails. That is certainly not all I am interested in working with as I work with many big business as well but it is where I started and continue to work. Remember why you are in this game. If you don't have a good enough reason, find one. I have lost count of how many reasons I have to be working in this industry and why I do what I do on camera, in my writing, in my radio interviews, and more. I am alive with passion and fire for what I do and I consider myself blessed and highly favored. Even when things aren't going well, you still count for something at the end of the day if you are growing your brand and providing quality and value to those around you.

Get organized and stay that way. If you have issues with overbooking or coordinating schedules with your team, find a way to keep a master calendar and put systems in place to stay organized and effective. The benefit of staying organized, among many things, is peace of mind and efficiency in your business. In my personal life, there are no stacks of mail or paperwork to go through. I stay on top of whatever business comes in each day and carry a to-do list of long-term and short-term tasks and goals, my laptop, and mobile devices. I am one of the busiest people I know but, because of my organizational methods, I don't allow myself to get overwhelmed easily. Process life as it comes. Don't get overrun or overwhelmed as it is hard to "get out of the weeds" when you do.

Have outlets and platforms that allow you to be the "ghost in the machine" and be in front of people without actually being there in person. Websites, streaming video, and media kits are good examples of these kinds of platforms. Aside from automation, have people in place who can back you up if you get overloaded. If I wanted to or needed to step away from my outdoor business, or TV show, or any other roles I serve in the outdoor industry, most things would keep running on their own with very little need for attention. This allows me more flexibility and a more simple life while at the same time giving my branding and platform the level of exposure needed for future success. Creating a system like this takes time but it can be done. One of the best books on building self-sustaining systems, businesses, and other platforms is *The 4 Hour Work Week* by Tim Ferris. While I may not agree with

everything in his book, his concepts have changed my life and the ways I work dramatically for the better.

It is said, that sales and marketing is a lot like the game of tennis. Those who serve well win. Serve well all the time. Don't express your frustrations to anyone but those close to you. Be patient, calm, cool, and collective in all you do. Most people don't care about your problems anyway as they are too consumed with their own issues. Be professional all the time, regardless of what you are dealing with at home or elsewhere in your life. I make it a point to never let my clients or anyone else I work around "see me sweat" or catch me in a bad mood. I present the image of success and winning, even during times when I might be struggling with something. Your polite persistence will win many races in the long run. If you tell the truth and show up on time you are doing better than most people in this world and you will rise head and shoulders above the crowd after a while. Again, good intentions alone are not enough to get the job done in a highly competitive industry. Only the best survive.

Never forget to "Ask, Thank, and Tell." I learned this concept from a leadership workshop I attended when I was a council board leader for my church. The three parts are easy to remember and I have adapted them to our purposes today:

ASK for sponsorship from prospective sponsors and support from sponsors you already have. Ask for help developing areas you need to grow in and learn more about. Ask for mentors and others who have made it where you want to be to help and guide you. And ask for customers to come and give you a chance to earn their business.

THANK those around you who have helped you be who you are and get where you are, even if that is not very far at first. This includes your sponsors, regardless of how much they have given you in return for what you have done for them. Thank your clients who have used you in the past for their outdoor adventures. Thank God. Always have gratitude for who you are and what you do. Great blessings and opportunities follow a grateful heart. Don't miss out on these things.

TELL others your story and seek to build networks with new people in an effort to grow your business. Tell sponsors what you have done and what you are doing for them now as well as what you plan to do with their products and services in the future. Tell your customers through your e-mail, social media, website, or other platforms what you are doing and why they should come back to work with you again.

You are "in-demand". I never say I am busy. I learned many years ago that this is about the lamest cop-out excuse there is and it is so over-used in our culture. You can be busy doing nothing and call yourself busy. We all have the same amount of time in a given day. What you choose to do with the hours and minutes boil down to a personal choice. There are plenty of people in this world who would rather sit on the couch, eat a bag of chips, and drink a six-pack of tall boys all day long and still say they are busy. I assume if you are reading this, you have more ambition than that and I do too. I'm not busy, I'm in-demand. This is the phrase I most often use, especially when I get a bit overwhelmed. Be of value and be in-demand. In doing this, you become the "Go-To Guy" people need and desire to help them. My great-grandmother's words often run across my mind, "The world is run by hard work and dedication." Truer words have not been spoken. To that point, it is true that most people in our culture today are

overwhelmed and overextended. Don't get frustrated if you don't hear back from someone right away or that a relationship or plan does not come to fruition as quickly as you would like, if at all. If customers don't call or e-mail you back, don't be afraid to follow up with them a few times. Many guides and outfitters I work with don't do this enough. I never give up on a sale until the other party says "no". Yes, there are tire kickers out there who will most likely never buy anything from anyone and just want to play "fantasy outdoor adventure" games, much like fantasy football or baseball, but I have seen far too many sales fall through the cracks due to businesses not following up and pursuing prospects to close a deal. Remember, most all of business boils down to sales and marketing. If these two things are not taken into consideration, a business will not prosper.

I can't reiterate enough that I think that part of a successful person or platform in any industry is to live each day with a positive attitude, even when things look like they are turning for the worse. They sometimes will. It's not what happens to you, it's what you do with what happens to you. Be proactive, not reactive with whatever you deal with in life. It is better to handle the issues that can come up in life on your toes (on the offensive) rather than on your heels (on the defensive) and this is especially true in the realm of the competitive world of the outdoor industry. I consider myself blessed and highly favored and I thank God every day for what I have been blessed with and how I can continually bless in new ways every day.

Thank you again for your time, consideration, and support. Please send me an e-mail or contact me another way if you gained some insight from this resource. I welcome your feedback. My company, Warncke Enterprises, is also here to help with marketing, websites, and other services, should you need them. Many blessings to you in your future endeavors.

About the Author



Dustin Vaughn Warncke is an avid outdoorsman and an authority in sales and marketing with a specialization in the outdoor industry. He started building websites in the late 1990's. During his college years and shortly after, he authored and self-published three paperback books both in fiction and non-fiction. Additionally, Warncke has served as a motivational speaker and master teacher and worked with numerous small businesses in sales, marketing, website development, desktop publishing and business consulting with his company, Warncke Enterprises. He earned a bachelor's degree from Texas Lutheran University in 2002. Go Bulldogs!

In 2013 and 2014, Dustin authored and published three outdoor industry eBooks through Warncke Enterprises on various topics. Educating young outdoorsmen and women as well as adults who are new to the sport of hunting, fishing, bowfishing, and other outdoor adventures is Warncke's passion. He has hosted hundreds of YouTube videos, as well as bi-weekly podcasts for numerous years.

In addition, Dustin also has served as the marketing director and co-host for Mac & Prowler's Coyote Tales TV Show for nearly 10 years and has filmed and been featured in several TV shows featuring product reviews as well as rifle, shotgun, and archery tech tip segments.

He also films, edits, and produces his own hunting, fishing, and other outdoor adventures which can be seen on his YouTube Channel. Many of his video

productions have been featured on regional and national television networks in the USA including the newest network he is pro-staff for, Pride Outdoor Network. He served as the Associate Publisher for *Texas Fish & Game Magazine* in 2019 and has authored several feature articles in this publication over the past 7 years. He also served as contributing editor for *Texas Lakes & Bays*, a best-selling fishing atlas, published by Texas Fish & Game, which is currently the largest independently owned outdoor magazine in the nation and the largest and most popular outdoor publication in the state of Texas. Dustin hosted *The Best of the Outdoors* podcast from 2015 until the end of 2019, most of those years under the TF&G umbrella of media platforms. Two of Dustin's feature articles were also featured in the first edition of Big Game Illustrated's digital magazine, *Big Game Online*. In addition, Dustin also has articles featured in the Lone Star Bowhunters Association magazine as well as Legacy Outfitters magazine.

Dustin's goal in all he does is to inspire others to do great things in the outdoors and to live with love, joy, purpose, meaning and significance.
