

# 5 TIPS

## To Jump Start Your 2023 Marketing Plans

Megan Kendrick

### WAVE chair shares lessons learned from behind the scenes of the pool industry as the owner of SpaRetailer and PoolPro brands

**T**he transition from employee to owner is one step that many Pool & Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA) members have been through or will go through someday.

In Megan Kendrick's case, the jump to owner after 10 years as editor of trade media brands *SpaRetailer* and *PoolPro* was both different and the same.

"One of the reasons why I felt like I could be a small business owner is that I had spent an entire career talking to small business owners. Now that I'm on the other side, I do feel like I just have a deeper understanding of what they're going through," she says.

"The funny thing is that even though I'm running a completely different kind of business than the people I'm talking to, it's all the same issues you're dealing with as far as payroll and cash flow and taxes and employees and marketing."

Kendrick's education in journalism and integrated marketing, combined with her five years now as a business owner, have helped her hone her business's 2023 marketing plans.

Her biggest tip for other owners? Get creative.



## Tip #1:

### Stock your lead pipeline now for later.

Since the start of the pandemic, many pool and spa businesses have been flooded with organic leads – business coming in with no marketing dollars behind it. If you've been sold out of products or you couldn't keep up with the work, you may not have focused on generating new leads. Now, though, with consumer spending slowing, a closed lead funnel could have a big impact. "We need to keep that funnel open," Kendrick says. "If you haven't restarted your marketing at this point, you have got to get going."

## Tip #2:

### Think outside the box with your experiential marketing.

Not sure where to restart your lead gen program? Consider using the off-season to get out there and create experiences your prospects won't forget when it comes time to buy.

Kendrick points to great ideas she's heard from industry leaders and seen firsthand, like:

- A company in Kendrick's own hometown sat at the school drop-off line and handed out free donuts—along with their marketing materials.
- More hot tub and spa businesses are positioning themselves as health and wellness companies and creating experiences by partnering with fitness boot camps—getting testimonials from customers who come by the store after a workout to hop in a hot tub or sauna and talk about how great it is.

Whatever you do: Be consistent.

"It's been at the bottom of your to-do list the last couple of years, and you have to have a plan and get back into those business basics," Kendrick insists.

## Tip #3:

### Go multi-channel with your marketing.

The pandemic accelerated digital marketing initiatives across many industries, but digital shouldn't be the only tactic you use, Kendrick advises. By choosing multiple channels—digital plus radio and TV, for instance—you can measure and compare.

"You cannot have an all-or-nothing approach," she says.

In fact, the drastic shift to digital has made some traditional marketing approaches now stand out. One Kendrick is bullish on? Direct mail. With fewer items in the mail and more households signing up for Informed Delivery by USPS (which gives recipients a head's up of what's coming), what's old is new again in 2023.

## Tip #4:

### Return to print advertising...

Direct mail isn't the only printed medium Kendrick says her industry sources are focusing on; many are shifting dollars from their former Yellow Pages budgets to local magazines and newspapers instead.

"I still believe in the power of print and I think that you just have to find the right avenue as far as your local market and what print products fit your audience," she says. "All the metrics I have seen for print advertising for the next year looks like it's going to be really strong. They're predicting some pretty big numbers as we sort of return to normalcy."

## Tip #5:

### ...But don't forget to appear cutting edge.

While Kendrick sees the demographic of many pool and spa buyers as skewing older, she points out that it's important to dip your toes into the water of what's coming next. In particular, she believes online video is going to continue to grow slowly this year, whether it's TikTok or Instagram Reels or a new platform to come. Don't spend a ton of money doing it, but also don't ignore it, she says.

"The great thing about our industry is that it's so visual with so many before-and-afters, even on the service side," she says. "Green-to-cleans can really be some great clickbait."

Go back to the basics.

*Kendrick says she draws inspiration as an employee-turned-owner from the people she writes about who have done the same, like Kelly King of Mountain Hot Tub in Bozeman, Montana, who has grown his business through savvy marketing and thoughtful leadership.*



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