



Features - Scrap Industry News SPREADING THE WORD

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A 1-(800) vanity name can help capture market share. Here's how to choose one, use it and profit from it.

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When business and government prospects need professional document destruction services, where do they turn for help? You might say the Yellow Pages, but savvy shredding contractors have discovered that it's easier to capture those customers with a toll-free phone name that avoids the Yellow Pages entirely.

Imagine your business prospects driving down the road when they see your trucks, hear a radio commercial or see a billboard. They have just seconds to register a phone number that will lead them to call you regarding information destruction services. But a series of numbers is difficult to recall. After all, what is a prospect more likely to remember: 1-(800)-747-3334 or 1-(800)-Shredding?

For years, Fortune 500 firms have branded themselves with vanity names in toll-free numbers. We recognize these major companies, with numbers such as 1-(800)-Go Fed-Ex, 1-(800)-Flowers, 1-(800)-Pick-UPS and countless others. These companies have successfully committed their numbers to our memory. These phone numbers translate to convenience for the customer, better branding, lead generation, word-of-mouth recommendations and, ultimately, sales and profits.

But it's not necessary to rank among the Fortune 500 or even the Fortune 2,000 to benefit from an 800 vanity name. When shredding company EnviroShred, Burnaby, British Columbia, started using a vanity phone name, its value became so apparent the company decided to replace its regular marketing with its 1-(800)-Shredding number. The number simply made it easier for prospects who needed on-site paper shredding to call EnviroShred.

A MARKETING TOOL

According to EnviroShred owner Tino Fluckiger, as the company expanded its service area throughout British Columbia, it began to notice that even areas outside of the lower

mainland also were able to access the company's shredding services using the phone number. Enviro-

Shred reinforced the name and number by providing comprehensive information on a dedicated Web site with the URL of [www.1-\(800\)-Shredding.com](http://www.1-(800)-Shredding.com).

Fluckiger says the company uses its toll-free name as a marketing tool. "We have been able to build our business over time utilizing the easy-to-remember vanity format. We've used its ability to give our company instant credibility by using the numbers in our overall marketing and advertising campaigns."

TARGETED REACH

Fluckiger's experience points out the power of a vanity name and the toll-free advantage. Although 1-(800) numbers originated as a toll-free service for long-distance calls, today's regional routing systems offer the advantage of a vanity name to be targeted toward local areas. Shredding contractors can have exclusive ownership for toll-free names in the specific areas where their potential contacts live. It may be one area code, overlapping areas for a large metropolitan area or entire states.

The rights to a toll-free number are offered by specialists called "shared-use providers." Typically, these companies have a variety of toll-free prefixes available and they manage the phone routing for the name you select so that calls will ring seamlessly into your local office. In most cases, you can choose the area codes, regions or states needed for the name used with that 1-(800) or other toll-free prefix. Then, when a prospect in the area sees that name, for example, 1-(800)-Shredding, he or she dials the number, and the call rings directly to your office. For businesses with multiple locations, the number can be routed to the office closest to the caller.

Shared-use providers charge as little as \$200 per month for the exclusive vanity name and routing service per area code. The actual calls received are billed on a cost per minute, which can be nominal but shows that the number is doing its job in attracting prospects.

For example, when The DocuTeam, San Luis Obispo, Calif., began using its 1-(800)-Shredding vanity phone name, the impact was evident. According to General Manager David Sylvester, The DocuTeam advertised the number and put it on the company's shred trucks. "With number recognition, we began noticing a month-over-month increase in calls coming in using that number. The 800 number was very easy for the customer to remember, especially with vehicles moving by." Sylvester also says he saw the vanity number as "a strategic move to own our marketing area."

The system also can help track advertising across various media by noting which calls come from the vanity number. Sylvester says The DocuTeam originally kept certain regular phone lines and sent vanity phone name calls to other lines. "We can track marketing awareness.

As we advertise in different media, we can see if certain advertising works...based on which calls come into our phone lines."

A COMPETITIVE EDGE

The fees for vanity numbers don't always increase overall ad budgets, as some contractors lower their Yellow Page or other outlays, says Dave Ashley of Sarasota, Fla.-based Telename (www.telename.com or 1-(800)-Tel-Name), one of the leading 1-(800) shared-use providers. "It's an advantage when the memorability of the 1-(800) name keeps customers from even going to the Yellow Pages."

Whoever you use for your vanity provider, Ashley provides these tips:

1. Always use words. Avoid purchasing a hybrid "number" that combines numbers and words. For example, avoid 1-(800)-265-Shred. Instead, use something like 1-(800)-Shredding or 1-(800)-Shred Now.
2. Use recognized toll-free prefixes. A 2009 test by search marketing company EngineReady.com compared the various toll-free prefixes for conversion rates. The highest return resulted from the 1-(800) prefix, which was the original and best known. The next was 1-(888). The last two were 877 and 866.
3. Spell out your service or product. "Shredding" or "Recycling" says what you do. Your name, however, may not. Using "SmithBrothers," for example, would not make it clear what kind of service you offer.
4. Use words that the average person can spell. Don't get too fancy. And avoid using the letters Q or Z because those letters have only recently been added to telephone keypads.
5. Once you have the phone name, use it everywhere. It should become your main number that the routing company will send to any phone line you choose. The words should be on all your trucks, of course. Add it to signage, banners, business cards, direct mail, billboards or anywhere you want to provide the customer with phone information.

A vanity phone name can reinforce your marketing across all media. Used well, a vanity name can make a solid impact on your bottom line.