

# Spreading The Word

## How a memorable 1-800 vanity name can help capture your market.

When business and government prospects need professional document destruction, where do they turn for help? You might say the yellow directory, but savvy shredding contractors have discovered that it's easier to capture those customers with a toll-free phone name that avoids the directory 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 as their shredding provider. But a series of numbers are 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,





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and countless more. These companies have successfully committed their numbers to our memory. These memorable numbers translate to convenience for the customer, better branding, lead generation, word-of-mouth recommendations, and, ultimately, sales and profits.

However, it's not necessary to rank among the Fortune 500 or even the Fortune 2000 to benefit from an 800 vanity name. When EnviroShred, a NAID member, first started using a vanity phone name, its value became so apparent that they eventually decided to replace its regular marketing with its 1-800-Shredding number. The number simply made it easier for prospects that needed on-site paper shredding to call them.

According to EnviroShred owner Tino Fluckiger, when the company expanded their service area throughout British Columbia, they began to notice that even areas outside of the Lower Mainland were also able to access their shredding services. And they further reinforced the name and number by providing comprehensive information on the Internet on a dedicated website with the URL of 1-800-Shredding.com.

Fluckiger noted that the company uses its toll-free name across the board as an essential 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."

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 for business or government 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.

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-Dana, Cleveland, OH

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## Selecting a Vanity Number

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, they dial 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 low as \$200 a 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 California's The DocuTeam began using their 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 shred trucks. "With number

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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 saw the vanity number as "a strategic move to own our marketing area."

The system can also help track advertising across various media by indicating which calls come from the vanity number. Sylvester notes that 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."

### Gaining a Competitive Edge

The fees for vanity numbers don't always increase overall ad budgets, since some contractors simply lower their Yellow Page or other outlays, says Dave Ashley of Telename ([www.telename.com](http://www.telename.com) or 1-800-Tel-Name). "It's an advantage when the 1-800 number keeps customers from even going to the Yellow pages," he adds.

Whoever you use for your vanity provider, the rules of the game are well documented, and Ashley provided some tips:

- **Always use words. Avoid purchasing a hybrid 'number' of both numbers and words. For example, avoid 1-800-265-Shred. Use something like 1-800-Shredding or 1-800-Shred Now instead.**
- **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.**
- **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.**
- **Use words that the average person can spell. Don't get too fancy. And avoid using 'Q' or 'Z' since those letters have only recently been added to telephone keypads.**

***"The 800 number was very easy for the customer to remember, especially with vehicles moving by."***

- ***Once you have the phone name, use it everywhere. It should become your main number, which the routing company will send to any phone line you choose. The words should be on all your shredding trucks, of course. Plus add it to signage, banners, business cards, direct mail, billboards - in fact, anywhere you want to provide the customer with phone information.***

A vanity phone name can reinforce your marketing across all media. Most of all, it helps prospects remember your number in order to contact you to handle their document destruction. Used well, a vanity name can make a solid impact on your bottom line.

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Information for this article was supplied by Tele-name Communications, Inc., Sarasota FL. Telephone is 1-800-Tel-Name. Email, [info@telename.com](mailto:info@telename.com). Their web site is [www.telename.com](http://www.telename.com).

