

Self Marketing

This is probably the most important area for a sole-trader, a partnership or a small firm owned by one person, to consider.

The obvious elements need to be considered first, from the point of talking to a potential client for the first time, to beginning work...

Telephone	: Answer machine message clear – all calls returned – mobile option given
Vehicles	: Sign written – clean – contents stored efficiently and neatly
Quote	: Returned quickly- Letterheaded paper – typed, using standard method
Work-wear	: Company Clothing – T-Shirts - clean work-trousers – boots
Equipment	: New – clean – maintained – neatly stored in clean box's.

Initial Reactions & Marketing

The impression you give off, not just the *first-impression*, but that viewed at all times, is the impression which will stick in your clients mind. It is commonly stated that '*the best form of advertising is word of mouth*', so a good impression equals more work & further recommendations.

The simplest guidance & advice is often the most effective, but it is very difficult to teach Old Dogs new tricks...! People who have been trading for years and have been '*doing Okay*' often cannot see any room for improvement, or feel that their way is fine.

With that in mind, consider these bullet points and ask yourself if they describe you...

- ❖ I always call to confirm an appointment & say I will be there, even if not late.
- ❖ I always try to arrive 5 minutes early
- ❖ I never leave a job until I have spoken to/contacted the client to let them know I am going.
- ❖ I have my own Hoover in the van, I never ask to borrow one, I never let the client clean up, no matter how insistent they are.
- ❖ I never let a client know a problem without first having a solution to offer (at no extra cost if possible).
- ❖ If I am sub-contracting (for example to a builder) - I ring them no more than once every 48 hours where possible, and if I have issues to consider I discuss them all in that one call.

If you have said **YES** to all of the above, the impression you are giving is unquestionably a good one, and for every one you say **NO** to, the impression could be seen to be declining. There are many other small ways anyone could improve a service, but **consistency** is the key. Don't just give this service to clients who you feel are **Big Payers**, the **Small Payers** will often be the ones who recommend you to the clients who will eventually give you the biggest jobs, and using that theory makes them all **Big Payers** in one way or another.

Corporate Image & Governing Bodies

There are a number of Governing bodies within the Electrical Contracting Industry. If you have joined one of these bodies, place it on your letterheads, vehicle and even your work-wear.

Allow clients to know you are covered by that Governing body, but don't go into any detail unless they ask... they really aren't interested! All they want is the job done well & safely with no come backs.

Subtlety is the key to a good corporate image. There is much talk about BRANDING in the business press these days, but unless you employ more than 50 staff your 'BRAND' is probably simply down to how good a job YOU carry out (as that is what people will remember). You may wish to have a LOGO though (part of the Branding ethos). If so use your own Logo and your governing body logos around your company name – but don't allow confusion. The clients you are dealing with are not in the Industry, and the main thing you want them to see is your company name.

Governing Bodies who are easily recognisable Include:

NIC EIC

ECA

NAPIT

BSi

ISO 9002

UCAS (Security & CCTV)

Also...

'PART P' Approved Installer

... is becoming an Industry standard logo to have placed on a vehicle. This says you are able to work on domestic premises without the need to inform Building Control directly, and is what domestic clients are being told to look out for from electricians. The ODPM (when the office was in place), and the watchdogs for the general public are hoping it will become similar to **CORGI** for heating Engineers.

Business cards – the simplest way to get your name 'out there'

Business cards should not contain too much information. Your company name, any governing bodies (if you have their logo – use it), your name and a phone number. Spend a little more money on a good quality card that will last and not wear out in someone's wallet. Plastic lamination is available cheaply, and stops people writing a phone number on the back and then throwing it away. Fridge Magnets with your company information and contact numbers on (possibly along with a small Calendar for that year) are fairly cheap and can be bought in Units of 10. If you carry out 50 domestic jobs a year then that is 50 fridges you will be advertising on.

A final tip – always give 2 cards to a client when a job is complete. One for them & one to pass to anyone needing your service, and let them know that's why there are two, and attach one card to all Invoices. If you purchased 1000 business cards, and at the end of the year you still have 700, you are not getting them out there enough!