

# IDEAS. WORK. RESULTS.

Strategic Insights On:

## **Home Building**

## Home Building

Constructing sturdy relationships between architects, designers and builders and those looking for their dream home, we've shaped strategic, innovative campaigns from the ground up. From open houses to model tours, warm leads, contracts and closings; the ethnography of the homebuyer is evolving rapidly from off to online.

We hope you enjoy this content and evok's commitment to the residential real estate industry. If you would ever like to be a guest writer or suggest blogs for us to write, please contact us at [info@evokad.com](mailto:info@evokad.com).



# ARE MILLENNIALS LOOKING FOR STARTER HOMES? WHAT MARKETERS NEED TO KNOW

## **What Millennials Really Want in a Home**

The last of the Millennials are finishing up college or trade school and officially entering the world of “adulting.” This new era of their life means paying bills, opening an IRA, buying a car or even a house—all without parental supervision.

With this generation between the ages of 22 and 37, many are buckling up and getting ready to buy their first home or invest in real estate. And now that they’ve surpassed Baby Boomers as the largest generation in the U.S., marketing homes to this powerful group is essential. For homebuilders and real estate agents, here’s how you can market your homes toward Millennials and get those “sold” signs on front lawns faster than ever before.

## **The Smaller, the Better**

We’ve heard the story over and over: Millennials watched their parents suffer a financial crisis in 2008 and lose their jobs or even their homes. This generation will be more cautious and will try to prevent that from happening again to their family, so they’re looking for smaller homes—but not tiny homes.

Smaller translates into a lower down payment or monthly mortgage payment to help this generation keep its finances in check. Think like a Millennial, build smaller homes and then highlight that cute 1,500-square-foot home in the ‘burbs.

## **Think Like a Smart House**

While you’re thinking like a Millennial, you also have to think like a smart house. Millennials want to interact with their homes like they do with their smartphones. This can range anywhere from the Nest Thermostat, which learns your habits and automatically adjusts the climate in your home, to automated appliances like the iRobot Roomba 890 or the Samsung Family Hub Smart Fridge.

Adding smart technology will catch the attention of Millennials and then promoting it across your channels will really bring them home.

## **Make it Green**

While Millennials care about the quality, they also care about cause. They want to make sure that with any purchase or investment, there’s a company behind it who supports a cause or charity.

And this concept doesn’t sway when it comes to home buying for Millennials. Take this narrative and transform it into an environmentally friendly, green home that focuses on energy consumption. This can be as simple as adding LED bulbs throughout the house or a compost bin in the backyard. On the flip side, you can go big and install solar panels on the roof.

**Give a Helping Hand**

Millennials grew up in the age of technology, and while we think they're hooked to their devices and have pushed human interaction aside, they still want a trustworthy real estate agent at their side.

In fact, a staggering 90% of Millennials used a real estate agent for guidance and advice during their home search in 2017. In your home listings or postings, as a real estate agent, advertise that you're there to help and you can walk customers through a smooth first-time home buying process.



# 3 STEPS TO CREATE A MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN THAT WILL BRING IN REFERRALS

## Referrals are Your Biggest and Best Sales Drivers

Let's say you're looking to join a gym to get back into shape. And one of your best friends, Jennifer, tells you how great her gym is with its variety of workout machines and intense classes. How likely are you to get a day pass to that gym or even go in and talk to someone? Pretty likely, right?

And after you go in one day after work and try out a class or talk to a trainer, you get to experience Jennifer's recommendation first hand and decide to join the gym on the spot. That's the power of a referral, and it comes from clients or customers who are satisfied.

In the homebuilding industry, there's only one way to get these satisfied clients: clear, consistent communication. To develop a streamlined process, you'll have to create a marketing communications plan. Here are three steps to do just that:

### Ask About Communication Preference

As we know, and as you know, it's all about the client. To that point, your first question for any client should be, "What's your preferred method of communication?"

Whether they say in person or by phone, email, text or even Facebook, you should be ready to communicate with them through that method. Once you establish a client-builder relationship in the way they'd like to communicate, the more likely they are to do business with you.

Your pre-construction communication also signals how you'll respond before, during and after the building process. When you meet with a client for the first time, dress to impress with your best communications attire, so to say.

### Create a Schedule With Clear Deadlines

Step two to your marketing communications plan comes after you convert a potential client into a paying client. Once a couple or family officially selects you as their homebuilder, you'll need to create a schedule—a very detailed and clear schedule.

Luckily, you won't have to do all the work yourself if you use a web-based construction management program. Make sure to select a program that has message or email features, a production schedule, progress pictures, and building plans and specifications.

With this program, you can include deadlines for key decisions, such as lighting fixtures, paint colors and flooring materials. This schedule with deadlines allows you to explain to the client that if they don't make decisions on time, construction will be delayed.

**Request Walkthroughs at Important Stages**

Last but not least, walkthroughs at critical stages lets clients see their home come to life and decide if it's headed in the right direction. Important stages can include electrical rough-in, drywall installation and structural framing.

With a marketing communications plan, there's no doubt or confusion left to the client, which creates happy clients. And one satisfied client can lead to one or 10 referrals.

Here's a stat to leave you with: according to HubSpot, referral-based sales normally close at 50 to 70 percent in comparison to 10 to 30 percent from other lead sources. So, are you making your clients satisfied?



# HOW YOUR HOME DEVELOPMENT'S WEBSITE CAN SELL HOMES

## 8 Things to Consider When Creating Your Community's Website

Like most daily routines or big life decisions, the Internet has drastically changed our processes, and the home buying process is no different. Potential or active home buyers aren't driving around with a Realtor® and touring from house to house anymore—they're going straight to the Internet for their all their questions.

And where do they get their answers? From your home development's website. Buyers want to know precisely what the home looks like and exactly what it includes before they step foot inside, and your website should answer that.

"The big issue is content," says Julio Aceituno, associate interactive creative director at evok advertising. "It's all about showing the community and selling the home and the lifestyle."

As a homebuilder, your ultimate goal is to convert visitors into active buyers and get your homes sold, but your website needs to answer a lot of questions in order to do that. Here are eight things to consider when creating your community's website that will answer any and all buyers' questions.

### Pictures and Then More Pictures

Whether it's posting an item on eBay, driving more bookings on Airbnb or selling a home, photos are your biggest selling driver. It's what draws the buyer in, stirs interest and keeps them on your website.

To that point, a photo gallery is a necessity, and you can't skimp out on them. Even though you might be tempted to use your new iPhone X or hire your friend who took one photography class in college, seek out a professional whose niche is taking home development photos. A professional photographer knows what buyers want to see and can deliver that in high-quality photos.

### Video Tours

When you build out your home development website, you can choose to let your photos stand alone or you can combine them with video tours to give users a true sense of the house or neighborhood.

There a variety of ways to go about creating a video, including walk-through videos, drone videos or a 3D interactive tour where the user chooses where they want to go inside the house. The type of video you choose depends on the type of house you're trying to sell. For example, if you're selling a three-story house with a large backyard, a 3D interactive tour coupled with a drone video might make the most sense for your community's site.

### Price and Quick Info

Before website visitors can become potential buyers, they need to know if the house is in their ballpark range and meets their needs. What is the house's starting price? How many bedrooms does it have? How many square foot does it have?

These are buyers' first questions, and they shouldn't be buried within the page. Rather, they should be placed at the top of the page. Here's some quick info that should be answered right away:

- What's the starting price?
- What's the square footage?
- How many bedrooms does it have?
- How many bathrooms does it have?
- How many floors is it?

Depending on the type of community the house is in, you can also answer questions about the backyard, front yard or garage.

### **Description**

While the photo gallery is one of your biggest selling drivers, the descriptions of your floor plans and models get down to the details. And just like a professional photographer should take your photos, a professional copywriter should write your descriptions. Make sure these questions are answered for the potential buyer:

- What's the surrounding community like?
- What does it feel like when you step inside the house?
- What design elements did the architecture integrate into the house?
- Does the house have any unique features?

### **Location**

Location is a big selling point, and buyers need to know exactly where the house or neighborhood is located and what's around the area without leaving your community's website.

Integrate a map on your website and pin nearby schools, doctors, grocery stores or restaurants. Take it a step further and allow users to type in their address to see how far it is from their current location.

### **Amenities**

Amenities can either be shown through images or words. You can list out the amenities included or you can post photos. Just make sure it's broken down into categories so it's easy for the buyer to digest in the information:

- Interior
- Exterior
- Kitchen
- Bathroom
- Other

### **Floor Plans**

The floor plan gives prospective buyers a clear overview of the house. The photos and videos show the inside of the house, but the floor plan shows how it's arranged. It's a good idea to give users the option to download the floor plan or even integrate an interactive floor plan that allows them to start planning where to place the coffee table in the living room or the bed in the master suite.

## CTAs and Contact Forms

A call to action (CTA) should be prominently placed on every page. Your potential buyers shouldn't have to click to go back a page or even go to the home page to make an appointment or call your office. When they're ready to take the next steps, the CTA should be handy.

On top of that, you can place a contact form or a request more information form at the footer of your page. "A person gets to the footer because that usually means they're engaged with the content," says Julio. And if they're engaged with the content, they're more likely to fill out a longer form.

Are you looking to build out a website to convert visitors to active buyers? Consider partnering with an advertising agency who can help you showcase your homes' offerings and turn some houses in homes.



# 3 THINGS EMPTY NESTERS WANT HOME BUILDERS AND REMODELERS TO KNOW

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## What Empty Nesters are Looking for in Real Estate

The first step in connecting to any audience, regardless of stage in life, is understanding who they are, what they want and what they need.

Today, we're here to discuss the wants and needs of empty nesters, specifically when it comes to real estate and how you can translate those insights into actionable steps in your marketing.

So, who are today's empty nesters? In 2018, most empty nesters also fall into the baby boomer generation, meaning the number of retired empty nesters to those who are still part of the workforce split almost down the middle. These baby boomers are a particularly important area of focus for marketers, as they are projected to control 70 percent of the nation's disposable income in the coming years.

For home builders and developers, the opportunity to turn empty nesters into clients is especially valuable as a considerable portion of this audience may have a reason to relocate or downsize. If you're ready to tap into this potential, keep reading for our three must-know insights on the empty nester segment.

## Downsizing Is a Big Decision, But One They Are Open to

With the kids out of the house, one of the first things parents notice is they are now using only a fraction of their space. Because of this, the idea of downsizing can quickly come into play. For home builders and developers, that means matching empty nesters' needs with smaller homes.

But what if your clients aren't sure if they're ready to downsize? To help them arrive at a decision while positioning your properties with smaller footprints as an option, keep the following messages in mind when developing your marketing materials:

- Downsizing typically reduces housing expenses. With only 17% of Americans reporting they feel confident about their retirement readiness, remind your clients this is money that can be applied towards their future.
- On the subject of the future, aging in a place may be a concern for your clients. A smaller home may offer greater accessibility as well as less upkeep.
- Location, location, location. Downsizing may allow your clients to choose a neighborhood that would have otherwise been outside their budget.

## **The Importance of Hobbies, Interests and Staying Active**

Today's empty nesters place a very high value on independence and their ability to maintain a certain lifestyle as they age. From tennis matches at the park to art classes at the local museum and meeting the kids for brunch on the weekends, they make time for socializing, learning and staying active. As a group, they are redefining the idea of the empty nester experience from "lonely" to full of life and new opportunities.

When considering a new home, condo or apartment, this group wants to know their hobbies, interests and need to be independent will be met. Ensure that's what your marketing is doing by showcasing how your properties works for your clients' lifestyles.

When reaching empty nesters, be sure to mention items such as the home's walkability score, nearby entertainment, and proximity to restaurants, shopping and health centers—everything your clients want and need to lead active, independent lives.

## **Personalized Communication Wins**

Personal touches are not lost on the boomer generation. While online tactics cannot be discounted when it comes to reaching empty nesters—after all, 82% of baby boomers have at least one social media profile—this group understands the value of person-to-person interactions.

This affinity for personalized communications presents an opportunity for your sales staff to develop meaningful relationships with your clients. From engaging with them on social media to follow-up phone text messages instead of calls, this generation appreciates a personal twist on modern day communication.

Looking for more marketing advice geared for home builders? Check out our strategies for promoting new residential developments and running retargeting campaigns.



# HOW TO ADVERTISE YOUR NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

## **An Advertising Blueprint Needs Vision, Design and Execution**

You've poured in the sweat and tears, and you're a couple months out from transforming what was once an empty plot of land into a new residential development.

But do you have a strategy in place to advertise and eventually sell all of these new homes? Just like your homes have a strong foundation, you need to build a powerful and lasting advertising and marketing foundation for your company. Here's how you can do it:

### **Branding**

You need a cohesive brand, and you need to sell it. According to a new home buyer study, only five years after Lennar customers bought their home, they didn't know who their builder was.

Try to showcase your brand at every interaction with your customers, so it can be engrained into their memories. You don't have to be obnoxious and throw free pens, koozies and tote bags in their direction. But make sure your company's cars, shirts, folders and anything else that's customer-facing is branded.

### **Website Development**

An International Builders' Show panel suggested thinking of your marketing plan like the solar system and your website like the sun. All of your marketing efforts around the web, like social media and email campaigns, should all come back to your website.

But, you just want to bait potential home buyers with your website—you don't want to catch them. It would disadvantageous for you if they read all the necessary information on your website and made their decision without even talking to you.

In order to take the first steps towards fostering a strong relationship, you want them to call or meet with you. To get a conversation going, test out different calls to action to see the best way to acquire email addresses and phone numbers.

### **Video Production**

If a picture can say a thousand words, imagine how many a video can say. Implement videos into your marketing and advertising strategy and showcase customer testimonials or home tours on your website, in your emails or on your social media pages.

You can also take it a step further and optimize these pages with keywords like "new home gallery" or "new home developments" to bring even more people to your website.

If you're new to the game or unsure where to start, consider hiring an advertising agency with experience in the homebuilding industry to help you hit the ground running.



# RETARGETING FOR HOME BUILDERS: HOW TO GENERATE ONLINE LEADS

## Keep Your Home Building Business Top-of-Mind with Potential Clients

From talking it over with a significant other to running budget numbers to ensure a good fit, making a decision on big-ticket items, like a new home or remodeling project, takes time. During this decision-making period, you could just sit back and wait for that potential client to come back, or you can take action with a retargeting ad campaign.

## How Retargeting Works

Have you ever visited a website only to continue seeing ads for that product or service long after you've clicked out of their page? Retargeting offers an opportunity for home builders to re-engage with potential leads by delivering your message to people you already know are receptive to it.

Here's what's happening behind the scenes of a retargeted ad campaign:

When users visit a particular page on your website, their browser is tagged with a "pixel," made up of a few lines of JavaScript. Alternatively, retargeting campaigns can also be launched using pre-built lists, such as your client database or potential clients who signed up for more information on your services.

As these users go on about their online activities, ad platforms, like AdWords and Facebook, will serve them ads based on their history with your company, re-exposing them to your brand and message to keep your business in their minds during their decision-making process.

## How Home Builders Can Leverage Retargeting to Generate Leads

Learning the strategy and theory behind retargeting is one thing. Putting those findings into action is another, much more involved practice. To get a better idea of what a retargeted ad campaign might look like for a home builder, here's step-by-step breakdown of what you need to know to generate online leads.

### Determine Your Leads' Interests

Knowing what your potential clients are looking for gives your company a straight shot to the closing table. If someone visits the remodeling service page on your website or enters their information on a contact form associated with a particular housing development, they are no longer a mystery lead—you now know what they are interested in.

With this information, you can retarget those leads with ads specifically related to their interests that link back to your website, for example a banner that promotes your remodeling services or a Facebook ad featuring the housing community they were looking into.

### Direct Leads to a Relevant Landing Page

Retargeted ads have a 10 times higher click-through rate than other types of display ads. With clicks to your ads' landing pages much more likely to happen, the question shifts from how to get consumers back on your website to where to lead them.

One thing is certain, your retargeted ads should not be linking visitors back to your site's homepage. Instead, create custom landing pages that relate to that particular ad campaign. If you're retargeting potential homebuyers for your new community, take them to a landing page that talks specifically about that location.

### **Give a Clear Call to Action**

By now, potential leads have seen your company's message multiple times. Once you've got them on your landing page, it's time to make them an offer they won't want to refuse. From a free neighborhood guide for the area they're researching to booking a complimentary consultation with one of your custom home experts, you'll want your call to action to be clear, concise and of value to your prospective clients.

When a person visits your site or contacts your sales team directly, they may be interested in working with you but not quite ready to pull the trigger on your services. Retargeted ad campaigns keep your business from fading into the background while your potential clients are weighing their options. We can help you get started.



# HOME RENOVATION TIPS TO CATCH THE BUYER'S EYE

Homebuilders are a busy bunch. Much of their time is spent making sure they're delivering the best products and services to their buyers and vendors, so it comes as no surprise they don't have time to market their best assets to newer audiences.

So, to help get you on the fast track to product-marketing success here's a few tips on how to maximize company exposure, while minimizing the amount of time (and money) spent on the process.

## **Make Yourself Memorable**

In much of modern homebuilding and design, the one thing that sets one address apart from another is the attention paid to detail. The more time and energy you place in creating a custom-built experience for buyers, the more likely they are to invest in your services and recommend those services to others. Some ideas include:

- Offering premium countertop or flooring options that other homebuilders may not have access to.
- Providing complimentary moving services, like trucks, boxes and other packing materials.
- Creating virtual tours or augmented reality experiences where potential homebuyers can customize spaces in real time.

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of homebuilders out there competing for business, so it pays to implement ways in which you can stay ahead of the pack.

## **Become the Buyer**

As much time as you spend building homes and communities for others, it's easy to forget that you, too, are more than likely a homebuyer. Take a second and make an inventory of all the pain points, improvements and other changes you'd want to see made to your own home or homes that are similar to the ones you build.

Hold in-house focus groups with employees who've also gone through the home buying process. Whatever approach you go with, the more information you collect about the audiences most likely to invest in your services, the better equipped you'll be to address their needs.

## **Invest in Digital**

The competition is steep, and there are plenty of others in your industry who are all vying for the same thing. Cut them off at the pass by investing a healthy budget into the digital marketing services that are right for you.

Whether it's social media, search engine optimization, and marketing or content, there's a wealth of ways in which you can corner the market online while increasing your bottom line.

If you'd like to know how you can take the next step towards digital marketing greatness, contact us today at 407-585-8231, or email us at [info@evokad.com](mailto:info@evokad.com).



## B2B VS. B2C: KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE TO BOOST HOME SALES

Not all content marketing plans are created equal. Some homebuilders can pour thousands of dollars into creating what they think is an ironclad marketing plan only to find out there's a miscommunication in the types of buyers they're actually trying to attract.

So, in the interest of making sure you don't fall into a similar trap, here's how you can capture the right audiences without having your messages get lost in translation.

### It's Only Business, Nothing Personal

When addressing the business-to-business crowd, there are a few important things to keep in mind when it comes to tone, voice and word choice:

- **Try to incorporate industry terms and phrases** when speaking to like-minded experts. It will help convey to others that you are current and knowledgeable in your respective field.
- **Refrain from using industry buzzwords** in situations where they don't explicitly call for them. It will feel forced, as if you're putting on airs and potentially show that you lack true substance.
- **Keep in mind that most B2B interactions are focused on the bottom line.** Get to the point soon and know that you're dealing with professionals, so there's less need to cover the superficial information that most industry experts should already know.

With these considerations in mind, you'll be able to create a rapport with B2B audiences that feels more like talking shop than taking a beginner's course.

### Talking to, Not at, the Customer

Switching gears a bit, the business-to-customer clientele has more opportunities to be conversational, informational and accommodating to their needs. This audience is in need of an advocate not a babysitter, so be mindful not to come off as condescending. Some other tips include:

- **Always, always, always provide opportunities for readers to learn more about your services** by being available to speak via phone, text, chat or email. Not everyone communicates effectively in the same way, so the more avenues you allow people to connect with your business, the better is for your bottom line.
- **Avoid industry jargon and terminology** that may go over the average reader's head. Just because you know the difference between a hyJOIST and a Posi-STRUT doesn't mean the reader automatically will. Keep it simple yet informative.

These are just a few of the ways in which you can help establish a positive relationship with potential customers, but know that it's usually boils down to how you approach each audience. The first impression matters so make sure it's an impactful one.

**Putting a Plan in Place**

It can be very difficult to keep all the voices in your head straight without the help of a professional (advertiser), but there are plenty of ways to get the ball rolling. For instance, creating an outlined content marketing plan will help you get the best idea of how you'll approach your target audiences and in which voice to convey the clearest messages.

There's more to running a successful homebuilding business than selling homes. You also have to become content-savvy enough to know exactly how to talk to the people you're trying to sell.



# THE FOOLPROOF CONTENT MARKETING PLAN FOR HOME BUILDERS

If you're lacking a solid content marketing plan, creating one from scratch can feel even more difficult than building a house with your bare hands.

Whether you're the one responsible for keeping up with your home building company's content or not, keeping your online presence filled with pertinent and useful information is very important.

So, to help you on the path toward creating consistent, engaging and topical content to help potential home buyers and sellers get the most out of your website, here are a few tactics to consider:

## **Know Your Audience**

As mentioned before, whether it's buyers or sellers, getting a good breakdown of your core audience will let you know exactly what kind of content you need to be serving. This information can usually be surmised from client databases, but if you're not sure about your target demographics, you can also create personas that help you hone in on the kind of audiences you assume you're servicing.

If you lean more towards buyers or sellers, know that there are certain terms and topics you should be avoiding when creating your content. For example, you don't want to run the risk of creating four-video series on the best ways to invest in a second home when the majority of your clients are first-time homebuyers.

## **Be Topical**

Going deeper into the idea of staying relevant, being topical is a great way to build credibility and strengthen brand recognition, especially if you're a small business that operates locally. Providing content on how to prep a home for hurricane season will go much farther if your reach is in a hurricane-prone area than if you're based in Tornado Alley.

Take some time and familiarize yourself with the kinds of hazards, weather conditions and obstacles that a homebuyer or seller may be most likely to face in your area of service. After that's established, you can then tailor your content to incorporate both the environment in question and the services you provide as a homebuilder.

## **Provide Multiple Perspectives**

If you've ever kept up with a blog or website that has the same author for every piece published, you'll start to notice patterns in the way they write, the topics they prefer writing about and their overall voice. This tends to get stale and repetitive over time. That's why it's always good to add additional voices and expert opinions to the mix. It keeps things fresh while helping your brand appeal to different people within the same audience. There may even be a time when an industry expert outside your company contributes to content if you ever find yourself low on people willing to write internally.

**Perfecting Your Web Presence**

Timeliness, consistency and relevance online all play important roles in the overall success of your brand as a home builder. Starting a sturdy foundation now to house future content can help ensure potential audiences get the information they need when they need it, the more likely you are to increase engagement, build credibility, and eventually drive more sales to your business. It's as simple as that.

If you have questions about creating an effective marketing plan and want to talk to us about how we can help achieve your unique business goals, email us at [info@evokad.com](mailto:info@evokad.com), or call 407-585-8231.



# A GUIDE TO THE BENEFITS OF SWITCHING TO LED LIGHTS

With a world of information at our fingertips, it's very easy to quickly fact-check, look up reviews, analyze the pros and cons, and make an informed decision about what you want to buy. A growing trend of increasingly educated consumers who don't just take a company's word and do independent research, means a shift in how these demographics are marketed.

This is especially true of "green consumers", those who are consciously trying to minimize their environmental impact through selecting products with sustainable and ethical origins. Making sure that your environmental credentials are robust and well-documented is the way to catch the eye of this customer.

## **Educated Consumers and Environmental Credentials**

Research into 'green consumers' shows that a company's commitment to improving and taking steps in the right direction is very important—you're not expected to be perfect. People also report being somewhat distrustful of companies' claims about their environmental impact, and greatly appreciate some kind of third-party certification. They are also eager to learn more—so a strategy of consumer education and outside confirmation of your eco-credentials is key.

## **Case Study: LED Lighting**

Think about LED lighting, for example. Developments in technology mean that LEDs are a viable but eco-friendly solution for lighting homes, offices, and more. With a lower environmental impact, all the way through from production, to use, to end of life (recycling), and a lower energy bill for the consumer, it's not difficult to see why these are the way forward. However, some consumers will always need a greater push to change from the status quo.

## Getting the Message Across

Communicating the environmental and personal benefits of your product and your company's ongoing commitment to sustainability needs to be transparent and rooted in fact—only tell emotive stories if they are authentic.

- Cite the facts so that consumers don't have to go looking for them. LED lights last 30 to 50 times longer than standard incandescent bulbs, a 36-watt LED bulb produces the same amount of light as an 84-watt incandescent bulb—and overall, you can reduce your carbon footprint by up to 70% by switching to LEDs. Who can ignore that?
- Independent certification is also really important. It really helps to validate the claims you are making. 76% of the public believe it's the best way to verify a product or company's values and credentials. For home appliances and lighting, LED bulbs included, the "Energy Star" symbol for energy efficiency is the place to start.
- Price, quality, functionality, and style are the factors people look for in a new product. These decisions are very much made by the head—whereas sustainability and environmental impact tend to touch the heart. Making sure that pricing, style, and functionality of your product are competitive is the starting point—and then use your consumer education and certification to explain any higher costs.

In the perfect world, all products and services would be part of a totally sustainable and ethical supply chain. The fact is it's not. So, for those of us making that commitment as a consumer or a supplier, being transparent and open is key.

*Submitted by guest blogger Jackie Edwards.*