

Machinery

Intermac make a greener CNC workcentre

Technology might have made life easier for people but it is also polluting the planet. Now technology is being used to tackle that as well – and saving users money in the bargain.

Intermac, familiar for their CNC workcentres, have decided to acknowledge the importance of green issues and have started to create a new generation of intelligent machines to cut down energy consumption and so reduce CO₂ emissions, as they showed at the Marmomac exhibi-

tion in Verona this month.

When not operating for a certain period (determined by the user) a stand-by system is triggered that shuts everything down, including the compressed air system and vacuum pump.

And when they are in use, the Intermac machines recover the surplus kinetic energy from the electrospindle motors or the axes movement and convert it back into electricity.

For stone processing, the system has been added to the Linea

Master and Primus 184 waterjet cutter so far. No doubt other machines will follow.

And because they save energy, you could be entitled to an interest-free loan from the Carbon Trust to help you pay for them. To find out more go to www.carbontrust.co.uk/loans.

Intermac had a 400m² stand in Verona on which they showed: the Master 45 Plus, a five-axes machine with a 4m work area largely used in mainland Europe for making memorials and stone features such as fireplaces; the four-axes Master 33 Plus with a 3m table used for a wide range of CNC machining activities; and the Master 30 three-axes workcentre with a 3m table, which is favoured by the kitchen worktop sector.



They also had a five-axes Primus 184 waterjet cutter on their stand. As well as producing cut-out and inlays, it has a tilting head that can cut at 45° for making kitchen worktop joints.

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Marketing

Alan Gayle is a sales and marketing consultant specialising in the construction industry. In this column he offers advice on how to make an impact in the market you want to reach. This time he looks at the essentials of a Marketing Plan.

This month's article is the second part of the basics of marketing that we covered last month. Once you know what marketing is and what it can do for you, the next thing you need is a Marketing Plan.

Marketing Plans can be very complicated and very costly, but they don't have to be that way.

I use the following six questions as an outline for the essentials of a Marketing Plan

1. Where are we now?

This is a brief Review of your business. It doesn't have to be too detailed. You're current turnover, your profit margin and how much you're spending on marketing is enough to get you started. It would also help you to know which customers are the most profitable for your business.

2. Where do we want to be?

This is about your objectives. Identify new target customers and set targets for increased turnover and profit margin. What are your priorities and what can wait until next year?

3. How do we get there?

This is your Strategy. Decide what you need to do to reach your objectives. Consider networking, PR, CPD

seminars, corporate entertainment, print advertising, lead generation services, digital marketing (e-mailshots, online adverts etc.) to name but a few. There are dozens of cost-effective ways to reach new customers. Also be sure to review your website and literature to ensure they enhance your corporate identity rather than fragment it. In other words, to convey a professional image, be consistent with your design, particularly with your use of colours and fonts and the placement of your logo.

As a guide, keep A-I-D-A in mind. It stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, Action. Your marketing strategy should lead your potential customers through this process.

4. What will it cost?

The all important budget. I've been asked several times how much a company 'should' spend on marketing. Of course, it depends on your objectives and your resources but I think 3-7% of turnover is realistic for most SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) in the construction industry. Whatever amount you decide, allocate a budget and stay within it.

5. Who does what and when?

Implementation is where so many Marketing Plans fall down. Have you heard of Jim Rohn's Law of Diminishing Intent? It's when, over a period of time, the good intentions you start out with fade away to nothing. Jim Rohn says: "The time to act is when the idea is hot and the emotion is strong." So to avoid this common trap, delegate specific tasks, allocate time scales for completing them, ensure everyone follows-up and review the progress at least quarterly.

6. What's my Return On Investment?

Evaluation will tell you your ROI (return on investment), which is the whole point of marketing in the first place. Stop what doesn't work, continue or increase what does work and compare your new position with where you were at Stage 1. How much have you spent on marketing? How much additional profit will you make? How can it be improved?

If you're still not convinced you need a Marketing Plan, consider what the ancient Chinese general and strategist Sun Tzu said: "Strategy [ie long term planning] without tactics [ie specific actions] is the slowest route



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to victory. [But] tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat."

Next month I'm going to pass on a few tips to improve your advertising.

● For insightful comment on the construction industry, take a look at the CIM-CIG (Chartered Institute of Marketing-Construction Industry Group) site at www.cimcig.org/news