

Marketing & Driving Demand: Social Media Tools & Strategies

January 16, 2011

Maryanne Fuller (MF): Hi there. This is Maryanne Fuller from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. Thank you for joining this call on the marketing and driving demand collaborative. The call today is on social media. I think everyone's phone should be unmuted through this system. Is that right? No?

-Can you hear me?

MF: Yep, great. So everyone's phone is unmuted. But if you can please mute your own personal phone just so we don't have any background noise. But this will allow you to speak up whenever you want to so feel free to ask questions, add your two cents, et cetera as we go through the call. So, here's the agenda for today. We're going to just briefly remind you of what the collaborative is all about. We have a bunch of resources that we want to share with you. And then we'll have some discussion about what strategies you're using, resources that you might want to share with other folks on the call, questions that you have, et cetera. So the first thing we're going to do though is do a shout out to hear who is on the call right now so that I have a sense of who we have and who might be able to share some of their experiences and stories. So, let's start on the East Coast. If you're on East Coast, just shout out your name and the grantee organization, city, state, or region that you're representing.

-Hello?

MF: Yep, go for it.

-Rosemary Olsen, I'm from CDC of Long Island. I'm representing the Long Island Green Homes and Buildings Consortium. We're working on the NYSERDA programs.

MF: Great. Anyone else from the east coast?

-This is Josh Mullens with the city of Greensboro.

MF: Great. Hi Josh. Anyone else? How about the Southeast? Is anyone here from the Southeast?

-This is Lizzie with the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance.

MF: Great. Midwest, anyone?

-Hi, Danielle Baulckim with Energy Works KC in the city of Kansas City, Missouri.

-This is Sean Fisher with the Greater Cincinnati Energy Alliance in Cincinnati, Ohio.

-This is Nancy Hohns calling from Philadelphia with Energy Works.

-This is Victoria Raleigh from Kansas City, also with Energy Works KC.

-This is Patrick MacRoy with the Chicago Better Buildings Initiative.

MF: So let's open up to the whole country. Any West Coasters or Pacific Northwest? Southwest?

-This is Forrest from the REpower Program in Seattle.

MF: Anyone else on the call?

-This is Joanne from Michigan, Better Buildings from Michigan with the Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth.

-And also Mary Templeton from the same program.

-This is Anna Beasley with SEEA also.

MF: Anyone else? Other folks who are on the call from DOE? Okay. We also have some folks on the line from Lawrence Berkeley Lab. We have Megan, Mark, and Liz who are all on our team here and who will be providing some of the information on the call.

So, let's dig right in. Just so folks who haven't been on these calls before know, we do have a monthly discussion call and the topics change every month. We're really interested in your guys' feedback on proposed agenda items. Those can be sent to Megan. The most popular useful topics will be selected for discussion. In general, we try to make these calls really about synthesized information to help you guys move forward, and we always trying to get grantees to share ideas with each other from their own experiences. We're certainly open to and happy to ask experts to join the call to answer Q&A. We're really just open to anything that's going on to help you guys move forward in the area of marketing and driving demand. So any ideas, suggestions, thoughts about what's going to work best or how to improve these calls—please let us know.

We're also available—Lawrence Berkeley Lab and other providers—are available to help you with direct technical assistance on marketing and driving demand issues. We'll respond to you really quickly—we've been helping a lot of different grantees looking at initial surveys that they're doing to test pilots, doing some analysis of RFPs that have gone out to help folks figure out how to better design those. We're really open to whatever technical assistance would best support you. And we're also really interested in any sample documents, reports, or other materials that you have benefitted from that you'd like to share with the group—both public resources that are online or available elsewhere, or your own documents. We've been really impressed by some of the documents you've found, that grantees have produced. I think those are often the most useful, the most relevant, since you're going through very similar experiences right now.

Let's see, I'm just going to check one more time if anyone else has joined the call. Do we have anyone from Boulder on the line? Or L.A.?

-Jacksonville's here, can you hear us now?

MF: Yes. And what's your name?

-Bruce Doueck and I have three other colleagues with me, and we're part of the SEEA program.

MF: Great. Anyone else we missed before? I see 32 people on the line. Okay, well, feel free to speak up any time. As I mentioned at the beginning of the call, you guys are all unmuted on our end so just mute your phones until you want to ask a question or make a comment. So what we've done, Megan Billingsley here and our team have looked through as many resources as we could get our hands on that we think would be interesting to you and help you get started in this area of social media. We're broadly defining social media as online attention-getting tools that often spread through networks of people and organizations. You know, it's hard to have a really narrow definition for this sort of thing. It's an area that keeps on expanding and blending all the time. But just to give you a sense of the impact, over half of Americans have a social media profile, and about 40% of those use it several times a day. It's also no longer just young people. There are a lot of middle-aged and older people who are active in this space right now, so it's potentially a really great way to get the word out about your program.

What we're going to do is go through some of these resources—I've sent this Powerpoint out to the Better Buildings listserv, so you actually should have a PDF of this with all the links in your inbox. Let us know if you don't and I'll make sure you get it. But the idea here is that we've talked to experts, we've summarized resources, combined links so that if you want to do a more in-depth look at this material you can do that.

So I'm going to turn it over to Megan Billingsley from our team and she's going to go through these resources, spend about 20 minutes going through that, let you ask questions at the end of that presentation, and then we'll open it up to discussion about what's working and what's not among you guys. So, Megan, I'll turn it over to you.

Megan Billingsley: Thanks, Marian. What you see in front of you right now is an idea of some of the resources that we've pulled together. Just to let you know, these are, again, just a few. There are a lot out there, and full disclosure, we're not endorsing any of these over any of the other things that are out there. It's just an overview to give you an idea.

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The first place to start, which was a presentation that I found really interesting, was this presentation by Brian Solis, on ideas on how to get a social media presence. This is a webinar that was designed primarily for folks who don't have a lot of time but want to get something out there on the web. One of the things that he really emphasized was that research is very, very, very important. It's the first place to start, and it really defines how you run your campaign. And the other thing that he said was that social media is work. You do need to put in the time to make it pay off. And one of the things that he said was that if you're really strapped for time, put the extra effort into the research and planning of your campaign at the beginning, because you'll have to spend less time modifying it and working on it later.

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And some general tips for social media. Remember most of these platforms out there, Facebook, Twitter, are very limited in the amount of space that you have to write. Your goal is to just catch someone's attention, and the best way to do that is really to be personable. Be yourself, use humor, and

really try to engage folks. Ask questions, respond back to them, and keep in mind through this process that you do want to have a call to action. You want to have something, an end goal, that you want your fans to do, so keep that in mind as you're going through this process.

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There are a couple really great ideas out there on places to get more information. The Social Media Playbook—there's a link here—is a really great place to start. It gives you an overview of a lot of the different resources that are out there, including Twitter. It has a really good overview of Twitter, which we don't cover a lot in the rest of these resources, but it's out there. Mashable.com is another great place that a number of people have recommended. They have a really good how-to section if you're contemplating different things like, "How do I set up a Facebook page," different ideas. You can search there and they provide step-by-step directions on how to do a number of different things social media-related. And then if you are interested in... Another really great website is Alltop, and what this website does is it's a search engine and it pulls the headlines from most of the major social news websites and blogs out there. And it's a lot of information. So just, when you open it, it's one page and it's got the headlines. It's a lot of information, but it's a really great place to just look and see what's out there.

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A number of folks who are really working seriously in the social media and outreach arena have recommended blogging as one of the best places to establish yourself or your program as an expert. And it's also a really great place to post some of the longer stories that you might be interested in, like case studies on your program, showing examples of things that you've done, information about events, and other things like that. We've included two websites which are free, easy-to-use applications for blogging: Wordpress and Blogger. And there are also a number of others out there.

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There are also a number of energy-centric social networking platforms. This is a webinar from the Efficiency Cities Network which goes over two of them. One is Earth Aid, which is a free residential platform which allows users to compare their energy use to that of their friends and neighbors. I'm here in Berkeley and my family is in Denver and I can actually compare my usage to that of my family in Denver, which is fun and it's interesting. And they also have a rewards program so you can say, "Oh, I've saved X amount this month. I get a free cupcake from the local deli." It's kind of fun. And then Efficiency 2.0 is another platform and it's customized for utilities and government clients but it's for the residential customer. And again, it allows a lot of that same comparison on how my savings are versus my neighbors.

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And another one which I think we're all very familiar with is Facebook. There are a number of tips on how to use it, but one of the most important things to remember is that Facebook really just creates awareness. You don't really expect everyone who goes and likes your page to sign up for an energy

assessment the first time they log on. But it also creates awareness of your program. So things to remember are: customize your Facebook page. Don't settle for the basic template. You want to make it as unique and personal to your program as you possibly can. And constantly reiterate your theme or message in your posts. And the other thing is, make it interesting to look at. Add a lot of useful pictures and other graphics that are relevant to what it is you're talking about.

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Some additional tips for using Facebook. Use your posts to highlight other resources that are out there, articles... You can attach a link to your blog, if you decide to establish one, that says, "Hey, we posted a new blog entry. The Joneses down the street did an energy assessment and renovation, and look at some neat pictures." Again, it goes back to creating the awareness. You really want to focus, figure out (and this goes back to the research) how to find balance, figure out how often your audience is going to want to hear from you, and send out just enough posts to keep them aware of what you're doing but not annoy them. And then leverage other related networks. Make sure that your program page is "liking" other pages that are relevant to your topics, what you're doing, your area, things like that. It really gives you a lot of exposure to a bunch of the other pages of fans who are very hopefully similar to the fans that you're trying to attract. And a number of folks have mentioned that they're struggling to get over that initial numbers hurdle, because Facebook is kind of a popularity contest. They're just trying to figure out, okay, well, I only have 30 fans, how do I get more? Most folks who have a Facebook page have a number of fans, so one way to do that is to sponsor an internal competition, to have your fellow employees get all their friends and associates to like your program. That kind of gets the ball rolling.

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Some additional resources for Facebook. There is a marketing page on Facebook that is put on by Facebook employees. It's a really great place to post questions and ask about other resources, and they have a number of articles and other things on there. And then there's also an advertising component to Facebook for those of you who want to get a little more into it. This is a really good article on tips for that.

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Another interesting idea ties into Facebook, but they're social plug-ins and this is a two-minute video that kind of describes the idea. Basically what it does is create a link to your Facebook, Twitter, other media, social media outlets, that allows users to "like" content on a web page. What that does is it then broadcasts in the news feed, and then Monday I looked on the New York Times and right there on the right side of my screen I could see what my friends liked in New York Times articles. So it's kind of a neat way to see what other people are looking at and liking.

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There is also YouTube, which is a great way to share video content. These are generally for shorter videos, less than fifteen minutes. There's a link here that has a number of articles on how to create

videos and create your own channels and also embed YouTube videos on your website or Facebook or blog. And then for longer videos, you'll want to try Vimeo. And the link is here as well.

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And then other resources on the web: Google AdWords, which basically allows you to advertise your program on searches that people are already doing. So if they're looking for an energy assessment, there are ways that you can make an ad for your program pop up. There's a link here for more information on that. And then Website Optimizer is another great way to test what's working when people are searching for your program, and ways to make your program pop up first. So it's a good way to test different strategies to see what works best.

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And that's it from my end.

MF: Thanks Megan. Let's pause here for one moment. Is anyone from Boulder County on the call? Okay, well, last week Susie from Boulder County sent out some really amazing resources to the Better Buildings listserv. There are three documents, and if you don't have those let me know. We'll send them to you. One is kind of their vision for how all the different social media mobilization strategies fit together and reinforce each other. This is just one of the diagrams from that document.

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Then they had a marketing strategy roadmap. This is going to be really useful for folks to look at if you're thinking through how you want to do your social marketing research. They did a good job with this and figuring out who their influential tweeters were as a first priority for doing outreach. Great, very practical document to check out.

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The third document they sent out was sort of cutting-edge ideas, stuff that they wanted to experiment with. One that's gotten a lot of press around California is CarrotMob, where you actually have a swarm of people come to a business that has agreed to maybe donate 10% of its money to a charity. There's ways of using a similar sort of strategy but more focused on energy efficiency. Monthly giveaways, video contests...so there's just a whole bunch of ideas from a fellow grantee in those documents. So definitely really encourage folks to check those out.

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So let's now just open it up to some discussion. Let's pause here for a moment and I'd love for anyone who's joined the call to just say your name and where you're from, so just feel free to shout it out. Any new folks on the call? We have some shy folks. I see the numbers going up but no one's speaking up. That's okay though.

-Hi this is Katrina Tavanlar from Booz Allen.

MF: Hi Katrina. Anyone else? Okay, great. So first of all does, anyone have any questions about these resources that Megan just went through? It will probably take some time to digest them and figure out what's going to be most useful to you. But as you guys do go through them, just let us know what questions you have about them, especially if you find other resources that might be useful to others. And actually let's just take a moment right now—Are there any other resources that are not on here that you guys have found really helpful in developing your ideas and strategies that the group might be interested in? Anything that you might recommend to others?

-This is Sean from Cincinnati.

MF: Hi Sean.

Sean: One thing that I would definitely recommend is to go on Google Analytics and to install the tracking code on your site so you can see where your inbound links are. So I know for us when we set that up we saw a large number of people coming in through Facebook and we knew to divert more of our social media resources there. It will give you a really good indication of where your traffic's going, what they're doing, and even which one of your customers actually follows through to take action.

MF: Great. Any other resources you guys have found? Okay, well, let's go then into a discussion hopefully about what some of you on the call are trying out, and I wonder if I could just call on a few of you. I'd love to hear from Forrest in Seattle and from the folks in Michigan, Joanna and Mary, about what you're doing. This is not like a presentation but if you could just share with folks on the phone what your plans are. I know you've both been thinking of some really creative things. So Forrest, if you're still there, would you mind kind of giving us the basics on what you guys are thinking about doing or already have done in the social media space?

Forrest: Yeah. I wish I could. I'm actually not the right person for that on the call. I'd be able to share after the call, probably, if you want us to send that information somewhere where it can be shared appropriately.

MF: Yeah, I just know you guys are doing some great stuff, so anything you can share with the group would be great.

Forrest: Sure. I'd be happy to.

MF: What about the folks in Michigan? I know I got an email, I think from Julie, about MichEEN.org and kind of the social media tool you guys are developing. Joanna or Mary, can you tell us a bit about that or other techniques you've been trying?

Mary: This is Mary talking. Michigan developed a platform, and it's really for the energy efficiency community. It's called MichEEN.org. It's intended for the energy efficiency network of contractors and consultants and anyone who is interested in or is working in that field. We've used that platform to do a couple of things on the program level. One is to write blogs and to post information about what's going on with the program so that people can get involved with the program if they want to get involved. And then the other is we use [it] as an internal collaboration tool, just so that we can communicate

information back and forth between the project staff, between the regional partners that we have, that were going through a lot and developing a lot of different documents, like contractor RFPs, contractor contracts, and marketing and outreach materials. So it's a nice place to be able to share information back and forth. It's more of a collaboration tool from that standpoint than a social media outlet. On the social media side, the regional partners and the regional coordinators who are implementing—you know, the feet on the street kind of people—they're developing their own kind of social media tools using LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, whatever it makes sense to do. And really tapping into as much as possible the neighborhood Facebook accounts that are out there, the community email listservs that are out there, any kind of community-focused efforts. They're trying to tap into those tools as much as they possibly can.

MF: Thanks. Any questions for the folks in Michigan? I wonder if Sean from Cincinnati, if you might be willing to just say a few words about your plans there. I know you guys have just gotten started with a number of things. I know you guys have thought a lot about this.

Sean: Absolutely. We started off actually immediately when we really ramped up our program this past January with Facebook and Twitter accounts. The Facebook account actually took off specifically because of one of your suggestions, which was getting everyone on board to invite their friends to join, and then that was exposed to their networks and sort of exponential effect. So we were almost at 1,000 fans at the end of the year, which, that trend continues and we see a few new people trickle in every day. So I think we've had a lot of success getting the message out, and we through our tracking saw our first audit request through Facebook come through last month. So I think eventually, once you get the awareness, there will actually start to be a stream of audits that eventually do come through. Twitter's been really good for us as far as a really minimal time investment but still able to broadcast. We've had some prominent bloggers in the area that we've sort of friended on Twitter who retweet some of our press releases and that, in a matter of seconds gets blasted out to several thousand people in the area. So we've seen a pretty constant increase of followers on Twitter as well. For this year, those were our two main goals. Going into 2011, we're rolling out a new website next month. We'll be starting a blog with that and hopefully that'll work to feed some of the social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter with more content. I guess another thing that I would highly recommend is that the more original content that you're able to put out there, the more likely that people are going to comment on it and "like" it and tweet it and retweet it. And then we're actually going to keep putting some videos on Youtube, some sort of "how to" DIY videos. The video portion of search is increasing, so if you go to Google now, a lot of times you'll put in a good keyword and you'll get a pretty decent video out of it. And we want to make every effort to get ourselves on as many top 10 Google searches as possible.

MF: Great. That's awesome. Any questions for Sean?

David: Sean, what are you doing the subjects of the videos on? This is David from Chicago.

Sean: We haven't sketched them all out yet, and we're still planning them, but I think we're going to go through some of our audit process. "What is an energy audit"—that'll probably be one of them. Maybe go through an insulation job and maybe have one of our contractors talk about what the process is, why

it's important. And then a small DIY video for small-scale air sealing, telling people where the most common places are, plumbing protrusions and that sort of thing, that they can tackle on their own and then telling them about the opportunities that we would have for full house retrofits.

David: That sounds really cool. We've been toying with the idea but just haven't had the manpower to do it ourselves, but if you did we would for sure use it and get more publicity for it. It sounds like it would be really valuable.

Sean: Great. Yeah. And we'd love to hear if anyone else is interested in using some of the stuff that we do. We'd be more than happy to share it. That's kind of what this whole thing is about.

MF: Sean, do you have a sense of how much time this kind of social media world is going to take in the next year in terms of staff people, percentage of time of a person? That's one thing that I've heard a lot from these various webinars that we kind of screened. Everyone says, you can't just put up a Facebook page and expect magic to happen. You have to nurture this over time, respond to people, and that takes time and work. Do you have some sense of what your expectations are for this next year?

Sean: I'd say for us, at least 20% of my time would probably be going towards social media. But I think that there's a good opportunity in avenues like Twitter to reduce that. I think Facebook is a lot more graphic; it demands videos and photos and constant updating. But you can get a Twitter page going pretty quickly. I think we all come across interesting links day-to-day that we'd want to share with all of our friends. It's an easy way to share that with all of your followers.

MF: What about other folks on the call in terms of your expectations for staff time? What are your thoughts on that question?

Lizzie: This is Lizzie with SEEA. Just a quick comment on that too. I was doing some research on social media and there is a way to combine your LinkedIn, your Facebook, your Twitter—I'm not exactly sure, I can look into it—so you're only monitoring one on the administrative side. It says that that cuts down your time, and then you can still monitor all of the social media outlets that you have, but without doing each individual separately. And that's a way to cut down some of that administrative time.

MF: Great.. I think someone actually responded to the Better Buildings listserv with a plug-in that did that. Let me just open that up. I sent out this document to you all through the Better Buildings listserv summarizing who's doing what, who responded to my original email on this, but Matthew from Huntsville mentioned this too, this Ping.fm. He says he's able to broadcast a single message to all three of his accounts, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. So Ping.fm is I think what you're talking about, Lizzie, and that sounds like a great resource for reducing time.

Lizzie: Exactly.

MF: So what else are some other folks on the call trying that they could share with the group?

Unidentified Speaker: I'm curious if anyone has tried the Groupon strategy—with all the group buying, LivingSocial, those kinds of social media things.

Sean: This is Sean from Cincinnati again. We are looking into Groupon for possibly something later this year. One thing that we will say is that it will take more of your incentives than the discount. Groupon takes an additional 50 percent on top of the mandated 50 percent that they make you reduce your price, so it's really an additional 75 percent incentive from the program.

MF: That's interesting, I didn't know that. I'm actually on Groupon and respond to those ads all the time. If folks haven't seen them, they are pretty cool and they highlight local deals, so a huge number of people get sent these local deals every day. It's one of the biggest, fastest-growing local advertising tools out there right now.

David: I think one way we could potentially consider doing Groupon or similar companies—again, David from Chicago—is that oftentimes when there is a more charitable aspect or an environmental aspect involved, and maybe the experience you just spoke of shows it wouldn't be the case, but they make exceptions for their margin for things like that. It is true that if you were going to sell something for a hundred dollars and you mark it down to fifty, Groupon is going to take 25 of that 50, so you're really really cut in terms of dollars. But there may be exceptions, or if collectively we went to them with an initiative to do it in multiple states maybe they'd be interested in doing it. Or if it came as a side deal—Groupon is now segmenting their deals depending on the usage behavior of their demographics—might be able to more narrowly broadcast to people who would be more likely to use our various services.

MF: That's a great idea. Other things you guys are trying or questions that you have, or issues that you're dealing with that the group might be able to give you feedback on?

Mary Templeton: This is Mary Templeton from Michigan again. I have a question in regards to the credibleness of the messenger. One of the things we're trying to do is make sure that the right person is giving the message and so what we'd really like to do is to get some of the people that have already embraced the program to do some of the blogs and to participate strongly in some of the online tools that we have. Have you guys been successful getting people like customers to participate in your social media efforts, and if so, how?

MF: Apparently not yet, but that is a great strategy. I know other programs, not in the social media space, but just in the person-to-person space. This is an example: in Babylon, NY, instead of just having a program staff person now speak at meetings, they'll have someone who actually did the work to their home. So that's definitely a theme that we've seen over and over again of what works best. Usually it takes a good experience with the program and then a personal relationship with the staff person affiliated with the program for them to reach out and ask the right people to step up and share their story. Any thoughts, though, from the rest of the group on how you might do that or ways you're thinking about, even in other ways, highlighting those sort of—here's a model person that you can relate to who's telling you about this and therefore you're going to believe them more than someone who's trying to sell you something?

David: CNT has done a handful of events, and now we're starting to do open houses where we highlight a multi-family building that has been through the retrofit process, and they get to ask the building owner questions and see how everything happened. And the construction manager goes through all the

logistics of how it actually came to happen, because a lot of times that's somewhat mystifying for especially multi-family building owners. If they haven't done anything like this it can be kind of bewildering, so we found that open houses so far have been received pretty well. It's still an evolutionary process, making them better and tighter, but for now, we think it's something that'll work pretty well.

Mary Templeton: This is Mary. And we hope to take some of our most effective customers, videotape them, and then include them as we speak with other customers. So, we have online video, we have iPads going into peoples' homes, showing them exactly what has happened in other peoples' houses, and have those customers testimonials, that's what we intend to do. We just haven't had enough experience yet to be able to do that.

MF: One example of a testimonial like that, if you go to the DCProjects website, they have a video of one of their customers talking about her experience, just as an example.

Unidentified Speaker: Okay, good. Thanks.

Cynthia: This is Cynthia from Charlottesville. I'm curious to know what kinds of referral programs you have in place. It's sort of like testimonials but more of a direct ask to the customer. We have a couple ideas that we're batting around and I'm just wondering what people may have tried.

MF: Cynthia, could you just say a little bit about what you're trying first? I think it would be helpful for folks.

Cynthia: Okay. Well, we have sort of a twofold approach, pulling on the ideas from social psychology that I have been reading about between the difference in asking someone to help out because you're appealing to their moral or higher nature versus turning something into a transaction, so, they'd be a little bit of a combination of both. So on the one hand, when we finish a job, we have our client relations manager who will be calling up the customer and saying, "We have a packet I'm sending out to you. It has your home performance certificate that we're sending you with your rebate money. If this experience has been positive for you, I'd like to get back in touch with you in the next couple of days either by email or phone—you let me know what's most convenient—to ask you if there's friends or family that you know of who can benefit from our program so that we might reach out to them." So that's direct way number one, and we don't have a ton of homes that have made it all the way through, past QA, so it's easy enough for us to do that right now. The other way that we have been thinking of was to potentially pay per lead or pay per referral, and what we might do there would be to either send a gift card or to make a donation to a charity of choice from that homeowner. But what we would ask for is that they refer five, ten—we haven't settled on the number—individuals to our website to come and actually set up a profile where they would get a peer comparison report and a ____ report of their utility usage. So the customers that they refer would be getting the benefit, but we would have a code that they could input in so that we could track these individuals directly back to that person who referred them and then be able to make the donation or the gift card or whatever on their behalf. You know, the problem, the good and the bad with that is that how much money needs to be involved in order to make it work somewhat well. Because again, we're turning it into a transaction. But the other

thing for me is I know how much paid media costs to do—an advertisement, say, in the paper—and if we're going to make the dollars spent back on that advertisement, I also know, okay, so, how many homes do we need to do, at what cost, with what percent of project speed for the ad to even pay for itself much less generate some positive revenue for our program. And it's pretty steep. It seems to me that a qualified lead might be better than even a targeted shot, and that's why we were trying to develop a strong referral program. So, I'm sorry I went on so long about that.

MF: No, that's great. And I definitely heard from multiple contractors that referrals are the number one way that they get leads as opposed to a lot of dead ends. Are there other folks doing similar things that they can share, or just have ideas for what you guys are planning?

David: David again from Chicago. I'd just be curious about how people are actually mechanistically doing the referrals, because we've tried things in different ways on not NYSERDA programs but other CNT energy programs and some have been more successful than others. Generally it seems like the more face-to-face the ask of the referral is made and the more emotional resonance that person can convey to the people they are referring you to, the more likely it works. We've tried to do them through email, and they've just fallen flat. So it seems that you can actually ask someone face to face to refer people, can you give us their names and then can we have them call you and ask you about your experience, that probably would work a lot better. Even though the more turnkey method of email seems alluring, it isn't that effective.

MF: David, at what part in the process was that ask made of your customers?

David: That was actually for one of our dynamic pricing programs, and it was people that had saved a given threshold of say 15 or 20 percent on their electricity bills. After they had received notice of their year-end savings, we then followed up with an email saying: "You've done so great, tell your friends and neighbors about it." And we actually promised them a \$20 American Express gift card, and we had a really low response rate. I was actually pretty surprised by that. You think that it would be pretty easy to blast that out to 20 of your friends, but it didn't actually end up happening.

MF: And then when you did the in-person ask, how did that work?

David: That's what we're doing now with our multi-family buildings, and that seems to be working a little bit better. But the nature of that, because they are multi-family building owners, the ask is much more in terms of dollars and cents and time commitment from them, and so it's just a longer lead time in dealing with them. So we can't tell right now how well or not that's working. but at least the response for people who are willing to share information is much stronger—they're willing to refer their friends.

Unidentified Speaker: And is it like, the contractor completes the work in a multi-family building and then makes the ask on the last day on the job?

David: Actually the contractors, the way we run it at Energy Savers is there's an auditor who's hand in hand with the building owner throughout the process, and that's the person—not the contractor—when the work is done. And this auditor oversees the construction process also periodically. So they're the

thread through the entire process. The contractor I think is valuable, especially if the workmanship is good, and depending on market and the program, that might be a good person to make the ask. But in our particular situation, it is the auditor who has the continuity.

MF: Are folks trying any other sort of referral systems that they want to mention? What about any other issues that you are having or questions that you have as you're starting to dig into social media?

David: The difficulty—again, David in Chicago—has always been how you create content that draws people in. This stuff by its nature is not really exciting. We all get excited about it, but the average person in the street I think they'd like to do it because they see the value environmentally and economically but that doesn't necessarily read when people use social media, most people out there. You can find compelling content or create videos or things that have some type of hook to them, that might make it a more attractive option, but creating that is expensive and time-consuming and not our forte and not most of our fortes. We're not production companies. So that to me has always been the challenge of social media. That and the continuity of messaging, keeping something going, keep it consistently and drawing them in, not just having 500 friends but having a dialogue with 500 people. That's just a difficult task given the nature of our work, but I think it's still an important thing to have in the toolbox. And I think the chart you had that was supplied by another partner that had Jane in the middle surrounded by all the various social components, I think that's a really great thing to continually refer to, to remember that all these things have their place and they need to be used synergistically to really impact the overall campaign.

Megan Billingsley: This is Megan. One of the things that I came across in my discussions with some of the folks who actually do this for a living was suggesting maybe energy savings tips. So you have your daily tip, ways to save energy, and just one of the things you can hook them with is once-a-day I get tips like, turn off lights! Most people know that but if you can come up with some other ideas along that line that might be one way to come up with a quick one-liner content idea.

Nancy: I'd like to jump in here. This is Nancy from Philadelphia. Our Energy Works program is an initiative of the mayor's office of sustainability and it covers a five-county metro-caucus area of Bucks, Montgomery, Chester, Delaware, and Philadelphia counties. And I did just what, I'm sorry, I forgot your name already, just mentioned regarding the energy savings tips. We wrote a series of about 60 and compiled them from information that was readily available on the web so that we just had a constant supply. And every single tip ends with, "If you'd like to improve your energy efficiency or know more about it, please visit..." and we gave the website of our program. So I think on an ongoing basis that's probably a very good idea.

Unidentified Speaker: Nancy, do you have any metrics on the back of that that told you how many click-throughs? Or is there any way to track the successfulness of reaching people that way?

Nancy: We actually just started doing that after the first of the year. They were compiled in late December. And then, as I said, to have a running dialogue and hope that people will come in. I can't provide any metrics now, but perhaps going forward, yes.

MF: And Nancy, where were those tips posted? Or how did you get them out?

Nancy: The mayor's office, in our case, and I've just been listening very carefully to what everybody said, we worked with a major advertising agency here and we are just now thinking about an integrated social media marketing campaign that will work in conjunction with our other advertising and marketing vehicles that we're getting into place. So we view this as a very large marketing plan that just has to work synergistically together. I'm sorry, what was the question? I lost track.

MF: I was wondering how you got those tips out to folks.

Nancy: So the tips. I'm sorry, that's what I meant to say. The mayor's office of sustainability already does Twitter on a regular basis, so until we decide how we want to go about doing that, we thought as I said since this is an initiative of the mayor's office of sustainability, that we would intersperse whatever else is being spoken about with these quick punches that drive people to our website.

MF: Yeah. That is actually a really important point to underline multiple times, is that ideally wherever possible you're not creating new communities or new strings of information. If you can get your information into existing streams, that's going to be much more effective, much less work. So that's a great strategy.

Nancy: We have found, like that, I think will help support and serve as scaffolding for the other social marketing initiatives that we do because like you said I think any avenue that makes sense and is viable that you can come through with a social media presence, it just bolsters your chances for success and just ratchets up how much ground you can cover.

MF: Nancy, could you share those tips with the rest of the group?

Nancy: Sure. I have them in a Word form. I guess I can just send them to you, or...

MF: Actually, just send them to the Better Buildings listserv. I think those would be useful for other folks to see.

Nancy: Okay. And what we did was we actually got a lot of those tips directly from the Department of Energy, and referenced—the person I gave them to in this department of sustainability, I just said, if anyone questions, just reference that that's where they came from, because we wanted to make very sure that what we were saying was actually proven and just and true, so that's what we used as our source. So I will send them to the listserv.

MF: Any other questions folks have, or issues you're having, or ideas that you're considering experimenting with?

Unidentified Speaker: I have a question, but it has nothing to do with the subject that we're talking about today. Would it be appropriate to bring it up now?

MF: Is it about marketing?

Unidentified Speaker: It is.

MF: Okay, go for it.

Unidentified Speaker: Okay, thanks. We, as I said, are just now getting a robust marketing plan in place and what I'm wondering is, is there any photography—we're looking for photography and I'm trying to avoid spending what it costs to take to take that photography. So it's easy enough to get simple photography of retrofits in action, but the more lifestyle or consumer-oriented photography is not so easy to get just on the fly, and I'm wondering if there is any resource where we could go and look to see if there's any lifestyle consumer-type of photography that could be utilized in advertising and marketing for energy efficiency purposes?

Anna: Can you all hear me?

MF: Yep.

Anna: This is Anna from SEEA. You need to go iStockPhotos or just istock.com. That is actually owned by Comstock now, which is a huge stock photography house, but iStock and also Dreamstime.com.

Unidentified Speaker: Thank you.

Anna: Both of those sites are stock photography sites that offer very reasonable very high quality. As a matter of fact, you'll start recognizing a lot of them because many of the major players use them now, because instead of having to pay three, four, hundred, thousand dollars for a stock image, you can pay from a dollar to maybe 25 dollars for a shot that has a lot of people in it.

Unidentified Speaker: Wow, that's great. Thank you.

Anna: For all different versions, resolutions of a photo. So if you just need something for your web, you don't need to buy a high-res version, you may only pay a couple of bucks for a webres. If you're doing something that you print, you need higher resolution. It's a great resource.

Unidentified Speaker: Well that is great, great information, and I have another question that may benefit our whole group as well. And that is: Is there any place where we can get giveaways to use when we go, when we have a presence at major trade shows, or even the smaller trade shows in our own regional areas? Rather than have to produce them in each of our areas, I'm wondering if there's something that would drive home the point of energy efficiency that is available. Like is there some kind of stock of CFL lightbulbs someplace that we might be able to brand and get them in quantity?

Unidentified Speaker: Do you have any partners that work with your association, any corporate...? For instance we've got GE, and GE will help us with stuff like that a lot of the time.

-Yes, we have received some help for our launch in the five counties from PECO, which is our chief energy provider at the moment. Of course, now there's a lot of competition since the deregulation in the market. They supplied us initially with 500 or so CFL lightbulbs, and I'm just wondering if there's

another place where we can get them either inexpensively or for free, through the DOE? Or is there something else that might be available for giveaways in quantity?

MF: I don't know of any. Anyone else, speak up or you can email Nancy. That's a good question, though.

Unidentified Speaker: I mean, I wouldn't even know where to begin because I think a lot of the stuff on energy efficiency that is on the DOE website... and I tried pursuing this on my own and didn't have a great deal of success. It looks as though there might be some things available for groups and associations, but I do believe there's a dollar amount attached to that and I can't help but wonder since we are an initiative, you know, might there be something available to us that can be... can some research be done somehow on behalf of our whole group?

MF: We can look into that. So, are you looking... it sounds like you want like a... you're looking for something free that's branded to give to people that directs them...

Unidentified Speaker: Yeah, that we could actually re-brand or co-brand, something that we could give out at trade shows that would help attract people to the booth, that would be a nice thing for us to remember them by. We certainly can produce stickers with our logo on it, as can everyone else, but I'm just wondering if there is something that we can take advantage of that's already been produced in bulk that we could use for these functions in each of our areas.

MF: Yeah, nothing that I know of, but I will ask.

Unidentified Speaker: Thanks.

MF: Any other questions or comments from folks? One last question for you guys: We ran this session in response to some demand around wanting to know what the resources out there are in social media. I'd love to get any feedback from you guys about going forward what would be helpful. We could bring in experts to dive into one of these more deeply. We could do a lot of different things, and I'd love to get your ideas now on the call. And of course, just feel free to email us later as well, about what would be most helpful as you guys think on this. Any thoughts on that? And just so you know, we're able, we can do research, we can bring in other experts on topics, there's not a huge number of boundaries around what we can do. If it's a resource for the whole group that we can put together we're able to just do that. So, any thoughts on that?

Nancy: This is Nancy. I do have one thought that perhaps might be useful. We (just as sort of a test this month) did an email campaign from the names that we gathered at our various launches in the five-county area, and to that we also added names that we could get from interested associations and groups and in the various counties that we serve. But I'm wondering if there's not been some research done regarding proper messaging on energy efficiency? Like, really getting somebody to respond quickly.

MF: For email in particular?

Nancy: Yes, for email. And I'd love to know a little bit more about when you're talking about this subject and you're trying to get somebody to respond. Is there some technique that is better than the other? Some guidance on running email campaigns, because number one, they are remarkably cost-effective as an advertising campaign, and number two, they can be used in conjunction with other marketing initiatives that you've already got going on.

MF: Great. We will definitely look into that. Does anyone have any initial thought son that or resources you guys have looked at? I know there's a lot of research that's been done so we can dig some of that up and summarize it.

Nancy: That would be great.

Rosemary: One of the things—this is Rosemary from CDC of Long Island— we're going to be using all sorts of social networking, and our marketing department has been using and developing lists so far, but we're also looking at using that software to develop mailing lists. I don't remember the name of it. Constant Contact.

MF: Oh, yep.

Unidentified Speaker: Has anyone had any experience using that in this type of campaign?

Nancy: This is Nancy again. The agency that we're working with, and I work very closely with them, that is indeed what we tried last month for the first time, and so we're real brand new at it but that is what we are going to be using. I can tell you one of the problems that we came up with during our last campaign, which was our first time out, we hope to be able to rectify it. When we were dealing with so many of the associations and groups, they must have had very strong filters on their email, particularly anyone associated with the government in any way, shape, or form, and our email could not go through.

Unidentified Speaker: Okay.

Unidentified Speaker: We really haven't figured out the answer yet, but that's something that we've got to iron out on this end.

MF: Does anyone else have some experience with that?

Cynthia: This is Cynthia from Charlottesville. We've used Vertical Response and are looking into Salesforce for our program management so that we'll be able to generate email lists on the fly depending on if we're trying to target a particular market segment of our customer database. So I guess the one thing I have to say about it is that while the editing software that goes with it is pretty easy to use, it's still kind of glitchy sometimes in terms of how stuff displays and why it displays in certain ways. And so what we decided to do is to have our official e-newsletter mocked up by someone who can code things properly and then just copy and paste that code into Vertical Response instead of trying to use one of their limited type things to do it. So that's my little bit of input on that.

MF: Great. Well, I think I'll close off the call for today. I really appreciate you guys being on this call. We'd really love any feedback on if this call was helpful for you or improvements for future calls, so please email Megan—her email's on the screen right there—you can just send her a note with your thoughts and also I just see a message here from Anna, you're asking about the Social Media Playbook that I referenced. There's a link to that in—I sent this Powerpoint out as a PDF maybe two hours ago now, so that link is there, and if you have a problem with finding it just send me an email. And finally I look forward to seeing most of you guys, hopefully many of you guys, in February, at the Better Buildings meeting in LA. There's going to be a number of sessions that are relevant to marketing and driving demand. We'll be having breakouts on single-family, multi-family, commercial driving demand; a session on community-based social marketing, discussion about real-time evaluation, and also a lunch table for discussion about energy advisors and energy advocates. So there's going to be a lot going on there around these topics, so I really look forward to seeing you guys all there. And again, feel free to contact us any time with questions, concerns, suggestions for improvement. We're really open to that. So thanks a lot everyone.