

Put a Label On It

The Benefits of Branding for Fence Companies

By Lisa Kopochinski

Anyone with their own business knows that the customer is king (or queen). To attract a steady clientele — and keep them — requires a strong business strategy, which is something fence contractors know well.

Branding is one of the areas that helps fence companies become and stay visible, in addition to providing a strong return on investment (ROI).

“Our company has been serving our state for over 48 years and branding has been a huge part of our success,” says Paige Ginn, president of Jefcoat Fence Co., Inc., which is based in Pearl, Miss.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MR. FENCE, INC.

The fleet at Mr. Fence in Evansville, Indiana. The company has been wrapping its trucks since the early 2000s.



Branding has been a huge part of Mississippi-based Jefcoat Fence Co., which has been in business for nearly 50 years.



"From the beginning, we were committed to providing company branding on anything we used traveling our roads. Whether it's an install truck, service vehicle or sales truck, we have them all bumper-to-bumper in company branding. We also feel it's very important to brand every job we install, so we place a custom company sign on every job."

Ginn adds that branding is not just for vehicles, but employees, too.

"Our employees are a beautiful display of branding. They are always dressed in company apparel leaving a professional image with every customer they encounter. Branding is powerful. Use it with pride."

Shawn King is president and CEO of Mr. Fence Inc., a company based in Evansville, Ind. that he formed in 2006.

"We have gone all in with our branding wrapping every single truck in Chrome with monster logos," he says.

"We are no stranger to this — starting with our giant lifted monster trucks back in the early 2000s — and then with our fully wrapped trucks 10 years ago. We use the trucks with community involvement projects all the time. We have used them in parades and even transported junior league football teams onto the fields."

Dan Blanc is CEO and founder of Fence King in Madisonville, La., a company he started in 1991. He says

the most successful branding strategy he has used is Google reviews.

"We have over 200 5-star Google reviews alone. This is 10 times more than our nearest competitor — which has 18 reviews. That, itself, has helped make us the leading fencing contractor on the Northshore of New Orleans, not to mention NextDoor, Yelp, and countless Facebook reviews."

Branding his trucks has made a huge impact on his business too, Blanc adds.

"People are always coming up to me to say how often they see our trucks. They'll say, 'Ya'll's trucks are everywhere! I see them every day! Or, our favorite is when we show up to do an estimate or verify measurements on a job that we sold via our online Virtual Fence Designer. The customer will say, 'So you're pretty much the only fence company around, right?' We just respond with, 'We like to think so!' Even though there are at least 15 or so in this area. You just can't afford to *not* wrap your fleet in some form or fashion."

Keith Pace is the owner of Texarkana Fence & Access Control, LLC, which has two locations in Texas — Texarkana and Tyler. As an AFA blue ribbon company and certified fence contractor, Pace has been in the fence industry since 1990. He says initially he found it difficult to understand why someone would pay that much to have a truck wrapped.





Texas-based Texarkana Fence & Access Control is a big proponent of branding. Not only does the company brand its trucks, but it also recently installed a new carpet for the front office with its logo. Pace's two-year-old granddaughter Remington (Remi) may just be the company's president at some point.



"I guess you could say I couldn't wrap my head around it," he smiles.

"However, a week after we had the first truck wrapped, we sold three jobs solely because of that truck. It more than paid for itself immediately. That would be one of my best pieces of advice to anyone, besides getting a CPA. If you even thought for a second about a billboard, throw that idea away and wrap your vehicle. Plus, it helps older vehicles appear to be newer, which helps with your overall appearance, without killing your bottom line."

COSTS OF BRANDING

The cost of branding can vary, depending on the route a company chooses to take.

"Some tactics are definitely more expensive than others, but they are all important," says Chris Steele, president of HighSteele Fencing LLC in Pace, Fla.



Pace, Florida-based HighSteele Fencing believes some branding tactics are more expensive than others but are all important.



"We have spent over \$15,000 on vehicle wraps and have an advertising budget this year set at \$50,000. Everyone knows us in town, and we keep the phones ringing."

We track our leads, and our vehicles are one of the main sources. I think it's all relative to the size of your company. We started out with literally no money, but never missed an opportunity to have our name printed somewhere. You have to start somewhere, even if it's posting your logo on Facebook."

Ginn says in her efforts to brand Jefcoat Fence it's important to seek various avenues, but not get caught up in how 'expensive' it may or may not be.

"Early on, we were committed to branding our company and for years it has proven to be a very effective and solid return on our investment."

Blanc says it all depends on who you ask when it comes to the expense involved in branding your company.

"The work that goes into branding and marketing a business isn't for the faint of heart. It's been worth every drop of sweat, tears, sacrifice and 18-hour days of working in the business by day and on the business at night, and \$30,000 in cash, which was recouped in the first year's increase in sales five times over. This climb to the top didn't happen until we decided on a brand, a logo and started pushing it into our community. The first year we had a 69 percent increase in sales; the second year we had a 133 percent jump in sales, and last year during a pandemic, we experienced a 32 percent increase."

King has a slightly different take on this topic when it comes to branding his company, Mr. Fence.

"I would argue there has been no expense in the traditional sense. I would suggest an expense is a cost of goods or service purchased. However, don't get me wrong: I have spent money associated with branding my business, but to build a great brand takes a lot more than just a purchase or two. It's a never-ending grind of moments that are hard to detect moment by moment. However, when you stop and look back you can see the results."



PHOTO COURTESY OF MR. FENCE, INC.

He likens branding to working out.

"If you don't religiously hit the gym and expect to see or feel results, that's crazy. But, which day or time did you become fitter? That's impossible to pinpoint. However, the

results are still there. Branding is the same way. You have to constantly own and drive your brand. You cannot just buy a billboard or radio commercial or build a website. That would be like going to a trainer once or twice. It is going to take a dedication and perseverance that would leave some feeling defeated and unaccomplished."

Adds Pace, "I used to think I couldn't afford the time and hassle to advertise. It was a struggle to be in phone books and the newspaper. Then social media came along and that was a great help. In addition to wrapping our trucks, this year we bought beach towels. I mean, really? What fence company buys beach towels? But it was a big hit. We also recently installed a new carpet for the front office with our name and certification on it. If you're not branding, you're spinning your wheels."

CHALLENGES AND THE PANDEMIC

Successfully operating any business is a challenge at the best of times. Add in COVID issues, and some would argue that many businesses are doomed to fail. But many fence contracting companies have viewed this time as an opportunity.

"We have been able to help our community and grow our brand better than ever before," says King.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FENCE KING

Google Reviews and branding their trucks have proven to be successful business strategies for Louisiana-based Fence King.

"We have always been there for that little league team or fundraising event, but now more than ever the community needed us. When panic set in, we immediately jumped into action. For example, I noticed restaurants and servers were taking the biggest hit, so I went to a local restaurant that was trying to survive even though they could not seat anyone. We offered our chrome-wrapped estimating vehicle for them to make deliveries for free and put one team member of theirs on our payroll for every hour they were open for an entire month, plus gave them a gas card. We took the burden off the restaurant, gave the server an income and provided the community with free delivery."

Blanc adds that if his company had not had branding set in place when the pandemic hit, Fence King would not have been as successful as it is.

"People were/are spending but spending more wisely. They were either looking to save a buck or get the most out of their investment. After capturing the community's attention, they knew our name, our brand to call."

Blanc says for the most part, 2020 has been positive for Fence King.



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"With people at home, they tend to have more home projects done. The best branding will get their call first, so don't cut yourself short."
— Chris Steele, president of HighSteele Fencing LLC

"We won't know it's a true effect until we see what 2021 has to bring. Were the additional sales of 2020 growth, pandemic driven, or both? Only time will tell. During the pandemic, we used all the extra profits to get a fenced in yard, erect a metal building/cover to protect our lumber (a.k.a. our customers' investments), a dry storage building, and purchase a forklift. Now we're able to buy more in bulk to increase our net profit."

Steele says that branding has never been as important as it is now.

"Like everyone else, we have faced a labor shortage here and there. It's hard to plan on someone or a whole crew having to take off for two weeks, but we have done our best. With people at home, they tend to have more home projects done. The best branding will get their call first, so don't cut yourself short."

Ginn says one of the biggest challenges facing her company — in addition to the pandemic — is dependable labor within the younger generations.

"Jefcoat Fence has been very blessed in the number of employees with long-term employment and tenure. We have employees that have been with Jefcoat Fence for more than 40, 30 and 20 years — at all levels in our company, proving they are deeply committed to not only our company, but to our industry. Today's current pandemic hasn't had a direct negative impact on our company, thus far, but having a company with a history of branding certainly aides in times such times as these. The effectiveness of branding has kept our business at an all-time high within our community."

Pace concurs and says his biggest challenge is surprisingly not the pandemic.

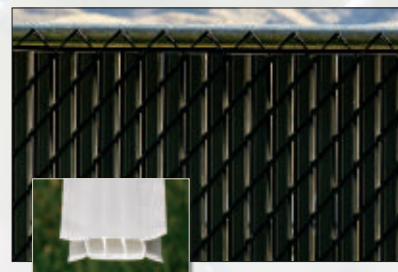
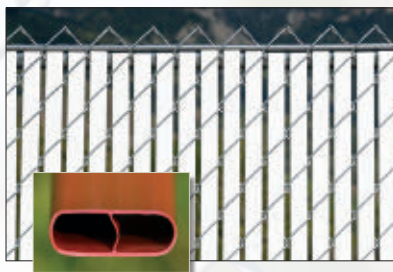
"It is still the workforce, which now is probably pandemic-related.

Branding helps people to be associated with a company that's out there and everywhere. We built up a culture that helps make our employees feel proud to work for us. People want to

be a part of that culture and a lot of that boils right back down to branding. At the very least, if you're not buying shirts for your guys, then you need to start." ■

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