

Great Lakes Water Solutions

A Preliminary Integrated Marketing Plan

Prepared by William A. Davidson
WADCO, Inc.

Preface.

Steve and Kathy:

This is not close to being a marketing plan yet; that's why the "preliminary" is there.

It's more of a template – one we can use to choose the tools we want to move forward with, and – just as important – how we want to move forward with them.

Since I don't know how much formal knowledge about marketing the various readers of this plan will have, I've gotten pretty basic in some areas. I call those sections "head nodders." You read through them, nodding your head and saying "I knew that" to yourself. Boring as they might be, however, they're necessary to make sure we all start from the same place.

The first step in developing a real marketing plan is to figure out where we want to go. The second step is figuring out how to get there. I think we all have a pretty good idea of where we want to go. This piece will hopefully get us started on how we want to get there – the tools we want to use, our approach, our sales proposition, etc., etc.

Of course being me, I've jumped the gun by including thoughts some of that stuff.

Ideally we'd sit down and go through it line by line face to face, and maybe we will in the future. I decided to send it to you so you could see where I'm headed, and also so you'd know I'm not just sitting on my thumbs, here.

Take a look. Let me know your thoughts.

Love,

WADCO

The beauty of a task like this is the opportunity to start pretty much from scratch. While a lot of good marketing has been done to date, the company's marketing program has largely grown like Topsy, by responding to whatever opportunities presented themselves. There has not been a consolidated image presented of Great Lakes Water Solutions in an orderly, managed, manner. That will change.

The fulcrum question we must respond to: With all the water solutions companies, distributors, and installers in the Barrie area, why should anyone choose Great Lakes Water Solutions?

Goals.

Very simplistically, with the exception of those who will never under any foreseeable circumstances buy our product or service, consumers come in six categories, frames of mind, or states of change. Note we're only considering our water solutions here – softeners, reverse osmosis systems, etc., etc., not our point of purchase materials like supplies, carryout items, 24/7 water fill, and other things sold in the store. That's an ancillary market, but an important one, not just because it's a profit center, but because it also familiarizes our prospect universe with our product, service, and team.

The prospect categories for our services are:

1. Those who have never heard of our product or service. *(Not many of those left)*
2. Those who have heard of our product or service and aren't interested. Their water is already all they want it to be. *(We know, however, that may not be true. There may be buggers in their water they don't know about; it may be doing things to their bodies, pipes, etc., etc., they're not totally aware of. This is the educational market – one we must make aware that their water really isn't all it should be. This can also be a replacement market: their current solution isn't working as well as it should.)*
3. Those who have heard of our product or service and are attracted to it. *(They aren't totally happy with their water, and know there's a solution, but it's in the back of their minds)*
4. Those who have heard of our product or service and want to have it sometime. *(Not happy with their water, and intend to take care of it sometime)*
5. Those who have heard of our product or service, are ready to buy it right now, and are just waiting for a good reason to do so. *(Reading the paper, asking neighbors, going on the internet to make a decision on what company to call)*
6. Those who have already bought our product or service. *(No immediate need, except for materials, supplies, service, etc., but may be in the replacement market)*

The ultimate goal of almost all immediate response, sale, or price/item advertising is to reach the number fives -- those who are ready to buy right now. If the communication is well done, it may upgrade some number fours to number fives, and perhaps even turn them into customers.

The ultimate goal of advertising, however, should be to upgrade the entire list -- turn ones into twos, twos into threes, and so on. It is quite possible to do this in one communication. Good direct response advertising (catalogs, direct mail) does it all the time.

Advertising that addresses only fives -- those in the market this very minute (if you're thinking about buying a water softener) -- is reaching only a small segment of the prospective customer base. Offering someone a good price on something he doesn't want is futile -- and expensive. Yet the fives is the segment that is going to buy right now. We certainly can't ignore it.

But we also want to hit all the different kinds of specific problems that thousands of people in our marketing territory are ready to fix right now. So we can show one or more of them, but at the same time we should infer that whatever the prospect is looking for, he/she will find it and have a happy experience with Great Lakes. We can't do it simply with words; we have to do it with the communication in toto.

The Role Of Advertising/Sales Promotion

Advertising prepares the way for a sale. That is its only function in a profit-oriented marketing campaign.

This timeless truth has been abandoned by many modern advertising agencies, believing instead that just getting the attention of their prospects is enough -- being cute, or funny, or heart wrenching, etc. So we get ads we laugh or cry at, but after the spot is over we can't remember who it was for.

The product must always be the hero of our marketing communication, not an afterthought. So if we produce humorous communications for Great Lakes, they must always have Great Lakes at their core, so at best the prospect thinks "I believe I'll call Great Lakes," and at worst he/she thinks "That Great Lakes sounds like a company I'd call if I ever needed that stuff."

To do that, every marketing campaign needs a fulcrum -- a positioning statement that is memorable, positive, and separates them from their competitors. Somehow, Great Lakes has already managed to come up with a really good one: "We make water grrreat!" It says what we do, it is positive, and includes at least a part of our name. It's grrreat!

That is our positioning statement, and will appear in every marketing communication.

Advertising can prepare the way for a sale by:

- Introducing a new concept in service
- Introducing new products
- Describing products and services
- Giving pertinent information

- Interesting prospects
- Developing inquiries
- Creating demand
- Helping open new markets
- Testing new products and services
- Stimulating employees
- Helping determine customer preferences
- Helping make a product or service competitive in the marketplace
- Supporting service programs
- Researching new markets
- Influencing mass markets
- Reducing sales expenses
- Establishing and maintaining corporate prestige
- Building customer relations
- Speeding acceptance for new and established services and products
- Helping close sales

In addition to these concrete objectives, from each advertisement there springs several correlative benefits.

Suppose a prospect sees “We make water grrreat!” on an appealing outdoor board, as he drives the 400. The next day he hears a cute radio spot that ends “We make water grrreat!” That evening he goes to Great Lakes’s website and sees the slogan again, with all the ways Great Lakes can make it happen. The positive effect of the first message will be reinforced by the second, and third, until one day it comes home to him/her in full and he/she seeks out Great Lakes.

Of course, those they meet with at Great Lakes must amplify the good message and feeling the prospect has already received. This is the synergistic effect a well-planned, well-executed, focused Integrated marketing program can achieve -- making the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Tools

All of our publics can of course be reached with mass media – radio, television, newspaper, magazines, etc. Certain categories of publics can be isolated and reached with other tools, such as:

- Direct Mail
- Personal contact
- House organs
- Newsletters

- Client publications
- Public service media
- Publicity
- Brochures
- Letters
- Reports
- News releases
- Television spots
- Radio spots
- Newspaper ads
- Magazine ads
- Outdoor boards
- Posters
- Audiovisual presentations
- News articles
- Position papers
- Books
- Bumper stickers
- Statement/paycheck stuffers
- Television and radio shows/infomercials
- Special events

All of these tools should be considered, evaluated for cost-effectiveness, and the most appropriate ones moved into the marketing mix. A main library of materials should be researched, prioritized, developed, and readied for use to meet certain urgent and important situations: new categories of prospects, emerging markets, new developments in the industry, etc.

The Internet and our Website

The internet is the only communications ever invented that can touch every prospect, in many different ways, depending on their habits and inclinations. Do they have a Facebook page? Do they Twitter? Are they on Pinterest, Flickr, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, Youtube, Vimeo, Tumblr? Do they frequent Digg and/or Reddit? Every social media site appeals to a certain age group and certain inclinations and idiosyncrasies.

Those sites are all run by, monitored by, and owned by someone else. Only one internet site is under our complete control: our website.

The website is the only communications tool in existence that – if properly designed – can satisfy all markets, all prospects, all publics, at the same time, with the same vehicle.

A website can be accessed worldwide by anyone with a computer. It permits instant updating, prospect tracking, realtime monitoring, and most importantly, it is an interactive medium. Prospects/Customers/Visitors can initiate a dialogue with the company, seek out exactly the information they require, register complaints, ask questions, make comments, obtain company history, watch the product/service in action, visit company headquarters or sales outlets, converse with the Chairman of the Board... in short:

Our website can become or present every other communications tool in existence – including face-to-face sales – and make them easily accessible to all of our publics at the same time.

The keys to a successful website are:

- It must be based on a sound marketing concept
- It must be designed in a way that appeals to the prospect
- Its existence must be made known to the prospect, in a way that prompts him/her to seek it out. This requires some form of advertising. (For example, you can get a toll-free 800 number, but no one's going to call it until you tell them about it.) However, it is true that a well-designed website can cause traffic on its own, by making it visible to search engines and in other ways.

Our communications objectives

Primary Objectives: To create or stimulate:

- A favorable feeling toward Great Lakes.
- A favorable feeling for the type of services Great Lakes has to offer, and for better services of that type in general.
- Dissatisfaction with similar services now being used by potential customers, or at least to bring that dissatisfaction into sharper focus.
- An impulse to compare Great Lakes's services with those of other companies.
- The desire to emulate those who are already doing business with Great Lakes.
- A new interest in and desire for the benefits inherent in our type of service in general, and Great Lakes in particular.

- The decision to examine or try Great Lakes' products and/or services.
- A feeling of enthusiasm, dedication, and efficiency among Great Lakes's employees.
- A favorable climate for Great Lakes salesperson.

Related Objectives.

- To retain and increase good will of present customers
- To create and retain public good will for Great Lakes among all classes of people -- customers and non-customers alike -- so that prospects and customers will find widespread support for their judgment
- To expand the market among groups previously uncultivated
- To stimulate the enthusiasm of the sales force -- and other employees and suppliers
- To anticipate future competition and trends

Special Objectives.

- To establish brand distinction for Great Lakes in the marketplace.

This industry is highly competitive, with dozens of competing firms in our marketing area. Establishing brand distinction is one of our most difficult and important tasks.

- To obtain immediate action from the prospect.
- To overcome specific prospect resistances
- To establish a particular mood

Since the buying motivations which induce action are more emotional than mental, one of the most important objectives is to create a definite mood -- a state of emotional sensitivity which prepares the reader, viewer, listener, etc., to accept Great Lakes's advertising statements, and to want Great Lakes's services. However, the predetermination of moods is the trickiest and most purely creative aspect of communications, and certainly one of the most important.

The right mood can create more genuine customers than any sales presentation based solely on fact and argument. It can produce positive attitudes of excitement, affection, admiration, wonder, curiosity, hope, and confidence. The wrong mood, on the other hand, can produce dislike, skepticism, caution, even actual repulsion -- and can have an adverse affect on sales.

The difficulty is that moods are induced entirely by suggestion. Therefore research and logic are not much help. Selection of mood elements and techniques can be guided only by subjective processes of feeling. This is why so few communications produce a positive quality of mood.

Business, which communications must reflect, is conducted in an objective world by men

and women who are predominantly extrovert in thought and action, and who find it difficult to reconcile such intangibles as "creating the proper mood" with profits, products, and competitive warfare.

Our goal revisited: creating the persona.

Our overall goal is to establish an overall, consistent image for Great Lakes. This image must pervade all customer/prospect/influencer communications and have a positive effect on the mind and emotions of our product universe, to differentiate us from our competitors.

Because the product/service is what it is, and because we are in a competitive field, as far as the average consumer is concerned everyone's selling the same thing. Great Lakes, Culligan, Excalibur, Purisoft, etc., etc. (This is every retailer's problem, of course, unless they're selling a proprietary, exclusive category of product no other retailer has access to.)

Assuming we're selling – as far as our average prospect is concerned – the same product as everyone else, it follows that we need to distinguish ourselves in the prospect's mind: make him/her want to do business with us.

Many companies try to do that with price: "We guarantee the lowest price." Others with service. I think we could talk forever about those things and not see a whole lot of difference in our bottom line – up or down. Because that's what everyone's doing. But that's not our whole story. In my opinion, our whole story begins and ends with Steve. Not necessarily Steve as a person, but Steve's persona as GLWS.

Steve: our persona

He's a great salesperson, wonderful at customer service, unbeatable at coming up with the proper solution to a customer's problem, great at installation and follow-up. So, anyone can argue, is everyone else in the business. So what else is there? In my opinion it's his true personality – not a corporate guy, not a boardroom guy, but more of a guy for whom solving water problems is a calling -- a guy who loves solving them, who's driven to solve them, and who probably would do it for free, except then he wouldn't be able to eat, and eating's pretty important to Steve. He's also a guy who doesn't take himself too seriously.

Water quality: Not a matter of life and death.

Water quality is a very important part of everyone's life. However, in most cases it's not a matter of life and death, but it does affect our quality of life. Important, but not something you hire a guy in a coat and tie to fix. Lawyer, accountant, stockbroker.

No, you hire a guy who knows what he's doing, a down-to-earth kind of guy who will come in and get it done at a reasonable price, provide great customer service, and make the whole thing a good experience for you. The kind of guy you might ask to stay for dinner after he finishes the job, or take out for a beer.

Not guys in gray uniforms with notebooks and pens wandering around and mournfully shaking their heads about how big a job it's going to be. Instead, a guy who walks in, takes a look, says "we can fix that," rolls up his sleeves and fixes it, enjoying the job and the work, and walking you through every step so you'll know exactly what he's doing and why.

That's the Steve persona I have in my head, and I think it's the one we want to put in the heads of our prospects. That's why I think we should create a non-traditional campaign, one that shows GLWS as that kind of person: a person who loves his/her job, and is incredibly good at it.

We present that image in all of our marketing communications, and ideally back it up with good customer reviews.

Core message.

Here is our core message, expressed as the body of a print ad, email message, radio/TV spot, or other major communications piece. NOTE: it might or might not ever appear anywhere in its entirety; it is the message and the approach we draw on to create and produce all communications tools.

Steve Agnew started Great Lakes Water Solutions about 30 years ago. Maybe you can tell from his accent that he's a Scot. And Scots, as you know, are very respectful of money. It's almost a holy thing with them. Scots, like Steve, don't pay a nickel more to get a job done than what they think it's worth. And they don't charge a nickel more than a job's worth, either. Because to them, that would be almost sinful. That's why when you get a bid from GLWS you know it's just enough to cover the materials, and the time it takes to install them, and make the company a reasonable profit. And that's why your bid from Great Lakes Water Solutions will be lower than a bid on the same project from any other reputable company. An honest price for an honest job. Count on it every time from GLWS. If your water isn't everything you think it should be – if it has an unpleasant smell or taste, if it's flowing too slowly or leaving stains on the sinks and toilet, you need a Great Lakes Water solution. Call us, at 866-396-0111 or visit glws.com. We'll make your water GRRREAT.

This approach obviously opens the door to many, many things, including kilts.

(Incidentally, I remember my parents had a song titled "What does a Scotsman wear beneath his kilt" on a 78 rpm record. Here's a link to a somewhat later version, in case you've never heard it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Us6vPEg1YpQ>. On the other side of the record was a song titled "Oh, why is the ocean so near the shore?" Don't need a link to that. Back to business.)

We've got kilts. We've got the sacredness of money. We've got the lowest bid. We've got the cure for all kinds of water problems. We've got our positioning statement.

Creative thoughts

Here are some interim random thoughts that could be used immediately and forever. They're straightforward, without too much personality, but they do state a problem, offer a solution, and include our positioning statement.

FACEBOOK, ETC.

Barrie's great! We love it! We love the people, the beauty, the climate. We're not so sure about the water. That's why we started Great Lakes Water Solutions 30 years ago. To make our *water* great, too.

TWITTER

If you're gassed by chlorine when you take a hot shower, you need a Great Lakes Water solution. Come to glws.ca. We'll make your water GR8!

If you see stains in your sinks and toilet, you need a Great Lakes Water solution. Come to glws.ca. We'll make your water GR8!

If you hold your nose when you drink your water, you need a Great Lakes Water solution. Come to glws.ca. We'll make your water GR8!

If minerals in the pipes are slowing down your waterflow, you need a Great Lakes Water solution. Come to glws.ca. We'll make your water GR8!

If you're cooking with unhealthy chemicals or bacteria, you need a Great Lakes Water solution. Come to glws.ca. We'll make your water GR8!

When your water doesn't taste like it oughter... it's time for a Great Lakes Water Solution. Come to glws.ca. We'll make your water GR8!

NOW FOR SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT

My focus in this marketing plan is to present GLWS in a way that distinguishes them from the competition, makes them stand out in the milieu of advertising and social media, and makes prospects and customers feel good about them. So I'm suggesting a non-traditional campaign. Make that a *very* non-traditional campaign.

Here's a start. This can appear anywhere – in print, on radio and/or television, on the website, on youtube, everywhere. However, it should be *heard* first, because it is unique, because it requires a certain rhythm, a certain ambiance, that distinguishes and defines it, and future viewings of it will recall that rhythm.

Okay, here goes. Open your minds. I hear it spoken – not rap, but rhythmically.

IF YOU TURN ON THE SHOWER AND HOLD YOUR NOSE
OR SEE NASTY LITTLE PLACES ON YOUR CLOTHES
IF THE FAUCET'S DOWN TO A LITTLE TRICKLE
IF A GLASS OF WATER TASTES LIKE A PICKLE
IF YOUR DOGGONE WATER DON'T BARELY RUN
CALL 866-396-0111

GREAT LAKES WATER'S GOT THE CURE
WE'LL MAKE YOUR WATER RUN CLEAN AND PURE
JUST CALL US UP AND NAME THE DATE
LET GREAT LAKES MAKE YOUR WATER GREAT!
CALL US UP AND WE'LL GET 'ER DONE
866-396-0111

Great Lakes Water Solutions. Come see us at glws.ca.

I know, I know. Different, huh? Well, that's what it's supposed to be. I also can see this as a video, in at least two ways:

- 1) First, we have each of our Great Lakes team members say the whole thing, one by one. Then we put it together using a different person for each line. We then film each of the events in the "jingle," put it all together, and put it on our website, on our youtube channel, and – if the budget permits -- on local television. Cost: mostly time and energy.
- 2) And/or we have a computer animation studio animate it, in the least expensive acceptable way. We have a company here called Rock Auto, that puts a jingle to very, very basic animation; that kind of thing might work for this. Here's a link to one of their commercials: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwFqGR0JaOU>. It's pretty cheesy, but it's cheap and effective. I'm pretty sure something could be done for us for well under \$5000. Not that ours would look anything like this; we'd develop our own look. The good thing is, it would never go out of date, and could be used indefinitely. Like the B.C. Clark jingle (LOL).

(Speaking of the B.C. Clark jingle – they do a cute thing every year by taping people singing their jingle in various malls, then editing it together and putting it on TV. We might think about a way to do something similar, and if the TV budget wasn't there, putting it on social media. Maybe we could even stir up a flash mob or two. Just spitballing, here.)

We can also use Twitter and other social media to promote certain aspects of the business.

Where the heck can you refill your water bottles at 2:00 in the morning? Any day of the week? At Barrie's only 24/7 water stop. Great Lakes.

Obviously this is just a start. We'll develop specific social media scripts for specific products and services, as well as possible events.

Some other ideas to set us off from the crowd and generate some publicity:

Shortbread/scones for sales calls.

What about linking up with a local bakery to supply shortbread or scones for salespeople to take on initial visits to prospects? If we put them in a box with the bakery's label they might be willing to give us a big break on price, for the free advertising it would give them.

Win a trip to see the Great Lakes of Scotland.

I'm not suggesting we start this next week. It's a big project that would require a lot of prep time. But I think it could give us a huge amount of free publicity, and tie us into the areas around Barrie and along the 400 more closely, by making them an essential part of the project.

That said -- let's have a contest, open to all comers. Leave your entry on our website, Facebook page, etc., and you'll be entered for a trip to see the Great Lakes of Scotland, all expenses paid plus some spending money.

Here's the contest.

Write a limerick, in the regular limerick format, such as...

A wonderful bird is the pelican
His beak can hold more than his belly can
He can hold in his beak
Enough food for a week
I'm darned if I know how the hell he can.

But to make it more interesting, the limericks should be about a town or area in the surrounds of Barrie. For example:

There once was a couple from Barrie
Whose water was stinky and scary
When they asked Deli Lama
How to end their trauma
He said "Call Grrreat Lakes, and ye best not tarry."

There was a young man from Innisfree
Whose tap water tasted like pee.
For his family's sakes

He texted Great Lakes
Now he's having a water partee.

Don't want to write a whole limerick? We'd have several posted on our website, missing the last line. Just complete one of them by filling in your version of the last line. Entries would be judged on the basis of originality and appropriate content. Enter as often as you like. The winner would get a trip for two to see the Great Lakes of Scotland.

The trip would include air transportation for two to Scotland and back, plus expense money.

I think we could get a terrific deal from a travel agency like tripcentral.ca. They're all over Canada. I've done this dozens of times with various clients, often getting the trips for free, just because we say something like "Trip courtesy of Tripcentral.ca Travel Agency" in all the advertising.

Here's a sample trip. Cost: about 1000 Canadian for each traveler, not including air fare, which is another 1000 or so (also not considering a potential cut rate from Tripcentral.ca)

Day 1: GLASGOW HIGHLIGHTS

Tour begins 2:30 PM, Glasgow hotel. Set out on a tour of central Glasgow -- a city that flourished in Victorian times due to the shipbuilding industry and international trade. See George Square with its ornate City Chambers and visit Provand's Lordship, Glasgow's oldest house built in 1471. Enjoy a welcome drink with your group before dinner. **(D)**

Day 2: LOCH LOMOND & LOCH NESS CRUISE

Travel alongside Loch Lomond, renowned for its unsurpassed beauty. Drive across the haunting Rannoch Moor and through Glencoe admiring the wild and spectacular scenery. Treat yourself to Scottish goods at a woollen mill. Keep your camera handy as you embark on a Loch Ness cruise before heading to Nairn. **(B, D)**

Day 3: WHISKEY TASTING & ST ANDREWS

Go behind the scenes to see how whiskey is distilled and enjoy a sample at Blair Athol Distillery. Travel to St Andrews, best known as the "Home of Golf," and enjoy time exploring independently. In Edinburgh your gracious manor house hotel is set on four square kilometers with two golf courses and spa facilities. Get ready for a festive Scottish evening dinner and a lively show with songs, stories and traditional dancing. **(B, D)**

Day 4: EDINBURGH CASTLE & CITY TOUR

Explore the main sights of central Edinburgh -- the bustling Princes Street, the wide streets of the 200-year-old Georgian New Town, and the Royal Mile where compact medieval houses reach 11 floors tall. Tour Edinburgh Castle and marvel at the Scottish Crown Jewels and the Stone of Scone. The rest of the day is free. On July 31 to August 21 departures, seats are reserved for the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. **(B)**

Day 5: EXTEND YOUR STAY IN EDINBURGH

Spend the day on an independent hop-on hop-off bus tour of Edinburgh. Enjoy a walking tour around parts of the city's historic areas – you will have a selection of different tours and routes. You will receive a taxi voucher to travel from your hotel to central Edinburgh. **(B)**

Day 6: TOUR ENDS IN EDINBURGH

Your tour ends after breakfast. **(B)**

B: Breakfast; L: Lunch; D: Dinner

Early conclusion.

Obviously, this is just a start. Once we are all in agreement on the type of approach we want for Great Lakes, we can start developing other tools, including completion of the website and of this marketing plan.

Let me review:

I believe Great Lakes should have a very positive, very down-to-earth, very honest image – one of hard working people who enjoy their work, who can solve any water problem, who use only the very best products, systems, and services, and who have a Scottish thing against overcharging. These people, however, don't take themselves too seriously; they can laugh at themselves, they can laugh with you, and they couldn't be happier doing anything other than what they're doing.

That's a tall order, and will take a lot of doing. I think, however, the ideas in here might make a good start.

Bill Davidson
July 19th, 2017