

AHIT success stories: Jerry Linkhorn



AHIT alumnus Jerry Linkhorn's home inspection company has increased revenue 31-fold since launching nine years ago. What's his secret?

"Marketing, marketing, marketing," Linkhorn said.

When Linkhorn graduated from AHIT's master classroom and started his home inspection business in 2006, he was following in his grandfather's footsteps of becoming a businessowner. But while his grandfather inspired Linkhorn to go into the business, Linkhorn knew it was up to him alone to make it a success.

That, he did.

Revenue at the Columbus, Ohio-based Linkhorn Inspection Group was about \$38,000 its first year in business. Nine years later, annual revenue jumped to \$1.18 million. The business that started in Linkhorn's home office is now in a commercial building, fueled by a staff of nine inspectors, including Linkhorn; three secretaries, a backup call center and part-timer to help take calls; two marketing people; and nine company vehicles that bear the inspection firm's name.

"I own the vehicles free and clear," Linkhorn said.

To put the phenomenal growth in clearer perspective, Linkhorn Inspection Group, which did 110 inspections in its first year of business, completed 2,363 inspections in 2015. Only two years ago, Linkhorn's business had three inspectors and company cars, tripling its size in 48 months.

Linkhorn said marketing approaches that he has learned from pros, including Mike Crow of the Millionaire Inspector Community, get people in the door. Outstanding customer service keeps them coming.

The words of Linkhorn's AHIT instructor, Mike Williams, always resonated, motivating him to market the business. In essence, Crow told Linkhorn he could

be the best inspector around, but if his phone isn't ringing, he won't make it in the inspection business.

Linkhorn offers simple advice for inspectors just getting their businesses off the ground.

"The best way to start would be to find 10 real estate offices," Linkhorn said. "Go to those offices once a week with business cards, brochures and chocolate. Put the chocolate or candies in the bowls, and go repeatedly every week to refill them. People will start asking questions, and that's how you start relationships. If you can develop relationships with real estate agents – they know you and they trust you – they're going to refer you to their clients. That's the No. 1 thing. First of all you have to get into offices and be seen. The second thing is you have to develop relationships."

Once you have the business, you have to keep it. Linkhorn Inspection Group retains business and referrals by letting clients know the company stands behind its work. For example, Linkhorn Inspection Group offers a 90-day warrantee, which most of its competitors do not.

"Buying an existing house is like buying a used car. It might run fine when you drive it off the lot and test drive it, but 30 days later you have a belt that breaks," Linkhorn said. "So, let's say a customer calls us 60 days after the inspection and says there's a leak in the toilet. We'll send a plumber out to fix it."

As successful as Linkhorn is, it started with his choice of what he said was the right school.

“ Choosing the right school is like selecting the right home inspector. You want to choose someone who has been around for a while, as AHIT has, ”

Linkhorn said. "I know quite a few of AHIT's trainers, and they are quality people and are honest. You can go to some local schools, but they also teach nursing, real estate... With AHIT, that's all they do is teach home inspectors."