THE NEW YEAR IS ABOUT GETTING A FRESH START, RIGHT? Well, that certainly goes for marketing. The beginning of a new year is a great time for reviewing your organization’s marketing to determine what’s working and what isn’t.

**Strategy**
As hard as it may be to believe, many parking organizations still take a haphazard approach to marketing. Many are stuck in the past, still pursuing the same strategies and tactics they were implementing back in the ’70s and ’80s. Parking is a vastly different industry than it was back then—heck, it’s nearly unrecognizable from just a decade ago. If your marketing revolves just around responding to RFPs and meeting up with friends at conferences, you’re living in the past. These are important components, but they are only a couple of the tactics you need to be pursuing.

Evaluate whether your marketing strategies still align with your organization’s business strategies. Where do you want to be as an organization in three, five, even 10 years? Where will new business opportunities lie in those periods of time? Is your strategy geared toward taking advantage of those opportunities? Remember, when you set a marketing strategy, you aren’t just planning for your current customers and prospects, you are planning for reaching future customers too. In many cases, those future customers won’t even be known to you because the industry is changing so rapidly. As you might imagine, being ready to reach customers who may not even exist yet can take some creativity.

**Traditional Approaches**
Most parking organizations still aren’t pursuing the most important marketing approach—public relations. I have to admit up front that I’m biased here. But in spite of my personal biases, I honestly think public relations can be a powerful marketing tool for most parking organizations and non-parking businesses that serve the parking industry. PR programs, particularly those that revolve around publicity, allow organizations to reach hundreds of thousands—even millions—of people who may have an interest in your organization’s product or service.

The question isn’t what type of parking organizations should be doing PR, because they all should. The question is, what type of PR program should be implemented to help your organization meet its business goals.

In with the New
By now everyone knows how important it is to have a social media strategy, but it’s not always easy for established parking organizations to implement one. There’s not room here to offer a comprehensive list of suggestions—I’ve written entire columns on that in the past. But I do want to reiterate the basics of social media.

First, don’t be afraid. Social media doesn’t have to be scary. Just remember that it requires a full-time commitment. Rely on dedicated, trained staff or consultants to implement your strategy, and give them sole access to your platforms, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram. The last thing you need is for everyone in your organization to have unfettered access to your channels.

Use social media to convey who you are as an organization and what type of values you have. Of course, social media is also a great way to keep your followers informed about your organization and what’s going on with you.

This is a great time for getting a fresh start with your marketing. By reassessing your goals and strategies and implementing a marketing plan that combines both tried-and-true and new marketing approaches you can be off and running!

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Your 2018 Marketing Checklist
By Bill Smith, APR

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