

# Contractor

# Reward

Manufacturers entice builders with cooperative advertising, tools, and even tickets to the races

# Programs

by Jefferson Kolle

Imagine this: At 10:30 p.m. Henry Homeowner in North Carolina goes online to research products for the big deck he wants to have built on the back of his house. He finds a manufacturer in central Ohio that makes exactly what he is looking for, but he's at a loss about what to do next. Then at the top of the Web site he sees a tab that says "find a contractor in your area." He enters his zip code and contact information and clicks send.

When Henry arrives at his office the next morning, there's an e-mail waiting for him from Carl Contractor, who does business two towns away. They arrange to meet that evening at Henry's house and when they do, Henry and his wife are impressed with the manufacturer's decking samples, photographs, and other promotional materials — all of which have the name of Carl's company printed on them. Two weeks later, Carl and crew begin building the new deck. Everyone's back is well scratched: Henry gets his deck, Carl lands a job, and the decking manufacturer sells product.

Deck-contractor rewards programs similar to the one described in the

scenario above have been proliferating as explosive growth in the composite-lumber industry has coincided with a jump in consumer Internet use. Composites account for about 20 percent of the decking market, up from 10 percent just five years ago; and according to The Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C., 60 percent of Americans polled in September 2007 researched products on the Internet, up from 35 percent in 2000. It's reasonable to conclude that consumers are increasingly researching decking products online too — and clicking that "find a contractor" tab.

Reward programs differ, but all are meant to build brand loyalty, mainly by helping contractors get more work. Carl will continue to spec a particular product if the manufacturer provides promotional materials, advertising, training — and customer leads that turn into jobs.

## Deeper Pockets

There are distinct financial advantages to aligning your business with a large manufacturer, according to Martin Grohman, the founder of Correct Building Products (877/332-5877, correctdeck.com), which makes

CorrectDeck decking and railing. He points out, "Manufacturers spend millions of dollars on marketing each year, but obviously your average decking contractor doesn't have that kind of budget."

Joining a manufacturer's program allows a contractor to take advantage of corporate marketing dollars. When the name of your business becomes associated with a product, every time local homeowners see an advertisement for that product, they also think of your company.

The programs offer all kinds of perks to attract participants. Trex — along with listing its members online — provides training on how to use its products. Lance Bunch, program manager for Trex Pro (800/289-8739, trex.com), says, "Contractors are the front line in getting our products out there. We want them to feel like they are partnering with Trex." The company will also assist in local home-show promotions and showroom set-up. "We want to help contractors become outdoor-living companies rather than just deck builders," says Bunch.

Some companies offer more nuts-and-bolts benefits. For instance,

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TimberTech (800/307-7780, timber tech.com) gives contractors product samples and sales literature to show to customers as well as T-shirts for members of the crew. Cheryl Roysdon, senior marketing manager for the company, says TimberTech will also assist with co-op advertising, whereby a qualifying contractor's business name and contact information will be included in corporate advertising in local newspapers and in TV and radio spots.

Other companies offer everything from custom-printed sales literature with the contractor's name included, to business cards, door hangers, and end-of-the-driveway signage. Fiber Composites (800/343-3651, weather best.com) allows you to order composites online if you're a member, "so they're waiting for you at your dealer right when you need them."

Some even feature free or inexpensive tools. GeoDeck (877/804-0137, geodeck.com) offers a \$749 Hitachi Coil Nailer for just \$99 with the purchase of 1,000 square feet of GeoDeck decking. All you have to do is download a form, fill it out, and give to your supplier.

With the rewards program for its

## Manufacturer Programs for Deck Builders

### **CERTAINTEED CORP.**

800/233-8990, certainteed.com/  
certainteed/pro/builder/  
fencedeckrail/programs/  
buildingsolutions

#### **Product**

EverNew vinyl decking and railing,  
composite railing

#### **Program**

Building Solutions

#### **Entry Requirements**

Apply online  
Purchase product to accrue points

#### **Benefits**

Product training  
Replacement warranties  
Cellphone discounts  
Redeem points for merchandise and  
business tools

### **CORRECT BUILDING PRODUCTS**

877/332-5877, correctbuiltzone.com

#### **Product**

CorrectDeck polypropylene  
composite decking and railing

#### **Program**

CorrectBuilt Zone

#### **Entry Requirements**

Basic and Premier memberships  
Apply online for Basic membership  
Training and testing for Premier

#### **Benefits**

Basic:  
Promotional materials  
Subscription to Deck News  
Warranty redemptions  
Premier:  
All of the above

Contractor referrals and Web site  
listing

10 percent discount on design  
software

Ongoing product training

### **FIBER COMPOSITES**

800/343-3651, weatherbest.com/  
professionals

#### **Product**

Weatherbest recycled plastic and  
wood decking and railing

#### **Program**

Weatherbest Installers Network  
(WIN)

#### **Entry Requirements**

Apply online

#### **Benefits**

Contractor referrals  
Web site listing and link  
Custom-printed literature  
Online product ordering

### **GEODECK**

920/435-1526, geodeck.com/cdi.html

#### **Product**

GeoDeck recycled plastic and  
cellulose decking and railing

#### **Program**

Certified Deck Installer (CDI)  
Rewards Program

#### **Entry Requirements**

Online sign-up  
Training at local dealer  
Purchase product to accrue points

#### **Benefits**

Redeem reward points at catalog  
retailers  
Nail-gun promotion

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Latitudes line of composite decking, Universal Forest Products (800/598-9663, ufpi.com) takes a slightly different approach — its benefits are intended to be used after you've taken off your tool belt for the day. Mark Deremo, the director of marketing communications for Latitudes, says, "We wanted to offer a broad array of premiums that appealed to many people with a wide range of interests. Golf or fishing gear, clothes, cook

wear, Nascar tickets — you name it. Many members redeem their points for personal use — and others might convert points into gifts for a spouse or child."

### **Piggyback on the Growth Of Composites**

Qualifying for some programs is as easy as just signing up; others require training, product-knowledge testing, or the purchase of a particular

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quantity of products. Patti Pellock, marketing manager for the CertainTeed Fence, Railing and Deck Division (800/233-8990, certainteed.com), says, "The remodeler program is a points program based on qualifying purchases of a combination of all CertainTeed products. Points can be redeemed for travel, merchandise, and various business marketing tools. [The program] requires the contractor to purchase \$35,000 annually in at least two CertainTeed product categories."

Several programs offer more than one tier of involvement. Correct Building Products, for example, has basic and premier memberships; the latter includes deck design software and other enhancements. TimberTech has Elite and Premier membership levels. Some tiered memberships are based on the amount of purchased products and others require different levels of training and testing.

Due to homeowner demand for low-maintenance composite decking products, the market is expected to continue to expand, at 5 percent to 10 percent annually. Growth will breed more competition, not only among manufacturers but among contractors too. As such, awards programs will become more important for both.

Gary Daley owns DeckBuilder in Barnegat, N.J., and is an elite member of TimberTech's contractor awards program. "The company's program gives me everything I need to sell its product," he says. "This has allowed me to grow my business just as fast as I want to. There's no better backing than that." Daley was quick to add that many of the composite decking

materials on today's market are similar in their composition, even their warranties, and that what makes one product better than another for him as a contractor comes down to the support and benefits offered by the manufacturer.

The bottom line is that it pays

to search the Internet and talk to your dealer and product rep about the available company rewards programs. It could take your business to a whole new level. ❖

*Jefferson Kolle is a former carpenter, turned freelance writer.*

## Manufacturer Programs for Deck Builders

### TAMKO BUILDING PRODUCTS

800/880-1834, builderscircle.com

#### Product

Evergrain wood and plastic composite decking and railing

#### Program

Builder's Circle (note: Builder's Circle involves a consortium of building products, not just Evergrain decking)

#### Entry Requirements

Apply online  
Purchase product to accrue points

#### Benefits

Redeem points for more than 6,000 items

### TIGER CLAW

860/940-6266, deckfastener.com/  
for\_professionals\_preferred.asp

#### Product

Tiger Claw Hidden Fasteners

#### Program

Preferred Contractor Program

#### Entry Requirements

Apply online  
Complete certification program

#### Benefits

Rebates on products  
Contractor referrals and Web site listing  
Trade show passes  
Promotional and sales tools

### TIMBERTECH

800/307-7780, timbertech.com/  
forprofessionals/contractors/  
contractors.aspx

#### Product

TimberTech composite decking and railing

#### Program

Elite Contractor

#### Entry Requirements

Apply online  
Pass assessment test

#### Benefits

Contractor referrals and Web site listing and link  
Product samples and sales materials  
Custom-printed literature  
Home-show assistance

### TREX COMPANY

800/289-8739, trex.com/trexpros

#### Product

Trex recycled plastic and wood decking and railing

#### Program

TrexPro

#### Entry Requirements

Apply online  
Build a deck with Trex

#### Benefits

Product training  
Contractor referrals and Web site listing

### UNIVERSAL FOREST PRODUCTS

800/598-9663, ufpi.com, ufpi.com/  
product/latitudes/pro/builders.htm

#### Product

Latitudes wood flour and polyethylene decking and railing

#### Program

Latitude Compass Program

#### Entry Requirements

Apply online  
Purchase product to accrue points

#### Benefits

Rewards program:  
Redeem points for more than 3,500 items  
Certified Installer program:  
Contractor referrals and Web site listing  
Promotional and sales tools