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“OPERATE UNDER THE NAME YOUR MOTHER GAVE YOU”

When a person becomes a home inspector, the first thing they do is come up with a corporate name. “John Smith” believes that if he calls himself “Super-Spec Home Inspection Service”, he is going to have more credibility as a home inspector. With a corporate name, he can someday franchise his business, hire subordinate inspectors and maybe eventually have a corporate entity that he can sell. Bologna. Very few people ever successfully franchise their operation, and they can expand their operation operating under their own name and when it comes time to sell their business, it is the number of weekly calls that matters not the corporate name. There is no additional liability protection by operating under “Super-Spec Home Inspection Service” as opposed to “John Smith LLC.”

There is however a big drawback to having a corporate name. The best business comes from referral. These referrals come from family, friends, real estate agents, attorneys, banks and repair contractors. People typically refer a person by their name. They will say, “Call up John Smith; he is a real sharp home inspector.” The perspective client goes to the Yellow Pages and does not see John Smith anywhere, only a bunch of home inspection companies with the letters, “Spec” in their name.

The customer may call up the telephone companies’ information service, but as most of you may have noticed recently, “Information” doesn’t do a good job connecting up names to phone numbers. More likely a prospective client may notice some catchy ad in the Yellow Pages while he is trying to find your name. He doesn’t want to fool around making phone calls or doing an Internet search, so he calls up one of your competitors.

Trying to promote and develop a corporate name is a very difficult and expensive process. As previously mentioned, many of the corporate names in the phone book are very similar. It would literally take hundreds of thousands of dollars of marketing to even begin to develop some corporate name recognition.

I know one home inspector who over the years has literally spent several hundred thousand dollars developing corporate name recognition. Hypothetically, let’s say his business

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was Empire Home Inspection. He successfully developed his corporate name to the point where everybody forgot who he was. Customers, clients, etc. referred to him personally as "Empire". I think this defeated his purpose, because it made him anonymous. It is twice as difficult to try and promote two names, your name, and the name of your business, as it is to promote one name, your own.

Let's say John Smith Operates his business under "John Smith Home Inspection." Anyone can look him up in the Yellow Pages and see who he is. They can look him up in the White Pages and find him, or look on the internet. Maybe even information will give someone his number. If John Smith is interviewed on television or appears on a radio program, and people attempt to look him up, they will find him.

I personally know twenty or thirty home inspectors, though writing these articles and attending meetings. Of those twenty or thirty home inspectors, except for one or two, I could not tell you the name of their companies. You'll never know how much business you have lost, because potential customers couldn't track you down.

If someday you want to expand, franchise your operation hire employees, or maybe even sell your business, you can change your name to "John Smith & Associates" Or "John Smith Home Inspection Services.": Make your mother proud. Promote the name that she gave you.