

Bring in the College Student Business

College students come and go, but that is actually good news for people in self storage. It means that students will very likely have a big need to store items they want to keep in their college town while they are away, or when they want to open up space in their dormitory rooms or apartments.

The fact remains that there are colleges, state universities and junior colleges in virtually every community across the country. Many self storage facilities are already aware of the business college students can provide. Students might not be your largest percentage of renters, but they are a regular, ongoing clientele.

There are very effective methods for reaching students. Students these days are so wired-in to the Internet and their cellphones that if you can become a local presence in those realms they will find you.

It all starts with realizing that students' needs are different than your usual customer. They aren't looking for large units, and they typically don't have the money to spend on them. Blake Miles runs two self storage businesses in Knoxville (Twin Spires Self Storage) close to the University of Tennessee. He's learned a thing or two about student business over the years.

"When we opened a facility near the UT campus in 2009, one of the things we did to cater to the students was build 4' x 4' x 4' climate-controlled lockers," Miles said. "The lockers went over really well with the younger students living in the dorms, because they were able to safely store

a computer, a small refrigerator and other electronic stuff that they weren't taking home with them."

So what is the most effective way to reach college students? Advertising in school newspapers is an option and can be effective. But even more effective is the use of flyers on campus and, of course, the Internet.

"I used to advertise in the student newspaper, but it's gotten so expensive," added Miles. "I feel I do just as well, if not better, with flyers. Plus, I figure most students are going to find me through a Google search anyway."

It also helps to know what is happening on campus. For example, freshman orientation is a good time to get your name out to a fresh bunch of students. Since parents often make it into town for sports events, having flyers or brochures at local hotels also makes sense.

Most definitely make sure that your Web page is not only informational but nice looking and reads well. Load it up with pictures of your facility and make sure that you mention, "Students Welcome!"

Your website will go a long way toward bringing in college students, especially if they know you are interested in them. And make sure they can check out your facility on their cellphone, which is lately used as much for business as the laptop computer.

Parents of students will want to know that your facility is safe and clean, so emphasize those qualities in your advertising and when parents or students come by to see your facility. ❖

