

WARNER'S CORNER

OUR IMAGE



JAMES WARNER

Whether a business or an individual, we all have an established image in the view of others. Huge sums of money are expended by American businesses for advertising and promotion to create a positive image. Perhaps the most significant contributors to our image, however, are our everyday actions and the manner in which we go about our lives. Do we routinely do

all we have promised (or promoted)? Are we dependable, reliable, and trustworthy? Are our jobs orderly and our equipment clean and in good repair? Do our employees dress appropriately and appear professional? Do they look like they know what they are doing? And, most importantly, do we strive for the highest quality?

Some years ago, I was part of a group that visited the nearby work sites of two different specialty contractors doing nearly identical geotechnical grouting. One was well-known due to a brilliant marketing program. Their full-page artistic advertisements were found in virtually every industry journal and they even sponsored university research and technical training programs for owners and their engineers, wherein they espoused their high-tech operations. On the surface, they appeared to be top quality all the way. The other contractor did no advertising; his only marketing was by word of mouth from satisfied people.

We visited the latter's site first. All of his employees wore matching coveralls. The mixing and pumping plant was fully automated, placed on a temporary concrete slab, and was so spotless it might well have passed a restaurant cleanliness inspection. After completing injection of each hole, the

plant staff washed down the equipment while the drill rig was repositioned. At the rig, a shallow trench between the tracks channeled spoil to a sump at the rear, from which it was pumped to waste. The entire operation was orderly and simply immaculate!

And then we went on to the site of the impressive marketing guy. It was completely surrounded with a solid barrier, so nothing could be seen from outside. Upon entering the offset gate, however, we were greeted by a lot of hollering and commotion from behind. Glancing back, we could see an overflowing mixing tank with grout splattering afar. There was no effort to channel or collect the drill spoil and the entire site was covered with mud! And virtually all of the equipment, as well as the workers, were filthy. It did not create a good impression. In fact, the client's representative in our group, who had previously all but decided on the messy guy, was heard to mutter "we sure don't want to deal with those bunglers."

Yes, our image counts; we can put up a good front with clever promotion, but cannot hide from those who experience us first-hand. Let us be honorable in our presentations, and create a good image through orderly and competent service!

James Warner, PE, is an independent Consulting Engineer specializing in foundation and structural restoration and repair. Formerly a contractor in these specialties, he organized the original concrete repair program for World of Concrete and presented those seminars for 19 years. It was at one of his seminars that the seeds were sown for what is now the International Concrete Repair Institute (ICRI). He continues an active consultancy and is an Honorary Life Member of the Institute.