

STOP READERS TURNING THE PAGE ON YOUR AD

You have a 3 second window of opportunity to grab a readers attention. How do you stop them from turning the page on your ad?

Most businesses or companies will use outside specialists like advertising agencies, a freelance writer and designer or the ad department of the newspaper to help them produce an ad. But for those without the professional resources, simply having an understanding of the press medium and what elements make a good print ad will help deliver more effective advertising for your brand.

Power of Press

Newspapers in their makeup are a product that reflects the values of their readers, giving them a clear sense of their world. It's often a very emotional environment full of real life stories and facts. People willingly go to a newspaper to read articles, to form opinions and retrieve further information. How often have you heard someone say "I read that in the paper!". The newspaper environment is seen as credible, detailed and informative, values which advertising benefits from.

Research has highlighted that newspaper advertising is innately valuable to newspaper readers. Readers welcome and use newspaper advertising and suggest that it adds to their overall reading experience. They actively search, seek, filter and observe advertising within newspapers, more than any other media. This is a place to compare prices and facts, form opinions on brands and decide whom to buy from. This is further evidenced by the amount of time readers spend with a newspaper (on average around 40mins Mon-Fri and about 60 mins on Saturday).

What's the Point?

Are you trying to show off all of your product range in a small advertising space, which could have the outcome of building an image that your store or brand is 'busy, confusing, cluttered and messy', or would you prefer to have readers build a positive image of your brand in their mind and

choose to visit your store. A surprising number of advertisements try to 'show everything' and miss the whole point of why they are advertising in the first place.

State Your Difference

Print advertising offers a very real opportunity to tell a story about your business, to let readers know who you are and why they should buy from you. But you need to keep it relevant to the reader and the medium. A good place to start is to identify what sets you apart from your competitor – is it your excellent service, experienced team, large selection of stock or cheap prices? This is quite often called your "Unique Selling Proposition" (USP) and can be easily identified when you ask your loyal customers what it is about you that makes them keep coming back. Your USP tells people the special benefit or specific advantage they receive if they buy from you. For example your qualified sales team may mean customers get more friendly and efficient service, a large inventory may mean they get better convenience or a bigger choice and cheap prices may mean they can save money and hopefully buy more!

The USP should form the basis of your ad. Typically, an ad has two elements the 'copy' (headline, body copy, captions and taglines) and the 'visual' (illustration, photography, type/font, logos, layout). You might think the construct of your visual or your copy makes little difference, but there are a few things to consider about each.

Headlines that Sell

The headline of your ad needs to grab the reader's attention and stop them in their tracks. It should be short, snappy and relevant. Around six to ten words is comfortable to read. Your headline is the start of the sale and should offer a benefit to the reader. Try to touch the reader emotionally in some way - anger, laughter, curious or thought-provoking and lure them into the body copy.

Try to find an insight or inner truth to the message that you're trying to convey, something that readers will easily relate to eg. You could say 'Handmade whistle \$2' or try a more powerful insight such as 'Annoy the shit out of someone whistle \$2'!

Make sure your headline makes sense as a stand alone – more people will read your headline than your body copy, so if you have something interesting to say don't hide it in a witty headline.

Copy that Clinches the Deal

Body copy is the persuasive heart of your ad, the place where you make your case with compelling arguments and interesting facts. Your body copy should answer and extend on the headline, selling the solution. This is where you develop the sales message and clinch the deal. However, be truthful about your claims as any hint of deception will instantly detract from your entire message.

Make sure you write the way your customers talk and avoid technical jargon. Sound positive. Keep your sentences short and to the point. Keep paragraphs to a minimum of say a couple of sentences, for ease of reading.

Avoid too much information, as it is likely to overwhelm your readers. You should say just enough to be helpful and for the reader to want to find out more. It should be clear for the reader to know what to do next – that is call you, visit your store or go to your website for more information.

Visual Appeal

Though you don't always require a visual, research suggests that it can draw more attention to your ad. However evidence also shows that a

small text ad can be just as powerful as a large visually driven ad – it's all about what you say and how you say it. If you require a visual, decide whether photography or illustration best suits what you are trying to say. If you can't afford to have photos taken, there are stock shot photo libraries (eg gettyimages.com) offering a large range of images for different budgets. Do consider illustration especially in this digital imaged world we live in – doing something a bit different will stand out (eg Vodafone Warriors "Spot the Difference" campaign where strong visuals in a cartoon format have helped draw the reader to their message).

Art Direction

There are two things that need to be considered when laying out the ad – function and aesthetics. Firstly, is the message being easily understood? Show your ad to a few people and see if they get it. If people aren't clear about what you are trying to say, then it's probably because your message is unclear. Maybe you have too many things on the page fighting for attention?

How many times have you seen an ad and asked "what are they trying to tell me?" Less really is more. If you are not sure whether something is worth including, then leave it out. Use as much white space as possible to minimize distraction and draw attention to what really matters. Remember the overall design should reflect the nature and purpose of the outcome you are trying to achieve.

Secondly, is the ad pleasing to the eye and easy to follow? Eyes naturally want to read from top to bottom and left to right. Control the visual flow of the ad by putting important items in those flow areas and leaving less important items out. Ensure that your layout is balanced, but don't centre everything. Observe the proportion of all elements in the ad and how they relate to each other. Do they compliment each other? Does your logo really need to be that big – it's just an identity badge after all and not the message! Make sure that something in the ad stands out or leads, like the headline or the visual, depending on which is more important.

On fonts, unity is important so pick one type face and stick to it. Small and decorative print could get lost on newsprint and some reversed out type (eg white words on a red background) can be difficult to read. Don't forget to proofread your ad. Typographical errors can diminish your credibility.

It's important to remember that advertising is not studied. First it must catch the attention of the reader. So while newspaper advertising is welcomed and used by readers, the different elements of a print ad contribute towards delivering a clearer message and a more effective ad. A good print ad can capture the eye of your potential customer and help motivate them to purchase your product or service.

10 Things A Good Print Ad Does

1. Stops a reader from turning the page
2. Sell's benefits rather than features – Was \$85 now \$55, or SAVE \$30!
3. Promotes a brand or store, whilst visually creating an image for it
4. Speaks to a specific group of people
5. Provides all the facts a reader needs, without providing too many
6. Conveys a simple message that is believable and honest
7. Tells readers something new - newspaper advertising in as important as the news.
8. Gives solutions to consumer problems
9. Uses white space – crammed ads get poor results because readers don't want to work that hard
10. Has a sense of urgency – it tells the reader to do something