

EFFECTIVE ADVERTISING STARTS WITH YOU

What is a cynic? A man who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing.

Oscar Wilde

Many advertisers waste their advertising investment because they buy advertising based on price rather than understanding the reason why they are advertising. This is especially true when an ad doesn't work; the finger gets pointed to the media. But for every finger pointed away from you, there are three pointing back.

Knowing what you want, who you are talking to, how you are going to say it and what medium best delivers that message, goes a long way to avoiding disappointment.

Know What You Want

Advertising is about communicating to potential buyers about your products and services – and encouraging them to make a purchase. You need to set clear and realistic objectives for advertising. Writing them down is good practice as it forces you to be specific. What do you really want to achieve? Increasing sales is too general – advertising doesn't increase sales ... it eventually leads to sales.

You can have long-term and short-term objectives. Long-term objectives may involve changing people's attitudes about your product or service or increasing awareness – these will take longer than a few months. Short term or action objectives might focus on increasing foot traffic through your door, calling for an appointment, sending in a coupon or visiting the website.

Next you need to identify the amount of change to be achieved – generally depicted as a percentage. Be sure you know (or at least have an idea) of what the current situation is so you can measure against this. Also, you need to state timing. When do you want to achieve this objective? Next weekend, 12 weeks, 3 months, 2 years?

The ultimate outcome should, of course, eventually be a sale – advertising brings the customers to you, but it is up to your sales process to turn those customers into sales.

Who Are You Talking To?

Who are your objectives aimed at? Who are you going to be communicating with? Write a description of them – male or female, how old are they, what kind of person are they – a mum, young man, retired or a decision-maker? A detailed description of your ideal customer should include demographics (physical characteristics like age, income, or where they live) and psychographics (personality characteristics and attitudes that affect a person's lifestyle and purchasing behaviour eg a "greenie" is concerned about the environment or someone who is health conscious will more likely be concerned with maintaining a good diet).

In carefully defining your audience you can make wiser media choices because certain media will have stronger appeal to some groups than others. For example with newspapers males are more likely to read the sports pages, while women enjoy the feature and lifestyle sections. Aged people are unlikely to read the gig guide, but corporate types would be more likely to read the business section.

There is not one product or service in the world that targets every single person – not even Coca Cola or McDonalds. TV, radio and newspaper, or mass media as they are called, all offer targeted audience delivery - audience is the currency of media. Talk to your media rep about who your target audience is and they can help you devise a strategy for the best way of reaching them.

How Are You Going To Say It?

A practical piece of advice is to get out and talk to your audience. Pay attention to what they are saying – your customers are very different to you and offer some very interesting insights on your products and services. Talk to them in their language – if they call a spade a spade, so should your ad. Avoid technical jargon at all cost.

Your ad is about your customer's needs and wants, not about what you want. An ad offering benefits will be far more effective than an ad that talks just features. Features are facts about the product or service (eg was \$85 now \$55); a benefit is the advantage of that feature (eg SAVE \$30).

Keep the message clear and simple. Customers make a split second decision about the relevance of an advertisement to them so it is important that your advertising has clarity, a single message (single-minded proposition) and is easy to read. Be truthful about your claims – if you make offers that you can't fulfil, it's the quickest way of losing your customer, *forever*.

Starch research¹ has revealed some creative considerations with newspaper advertising. Coloured ads attract reader attention – they are 62% more likely to be read than black and white ads. If you can't afford colour, use a 2-colour border to attract attention. Yellow is particularly powerful.

Ad size increases readership, so too does the use of visuals – especially showing the product. But appropriate use of white space can give order to an ad, aid its flow and enhance the clarity of its message. Readership is affected by layout, so for smaller ads, keep it simple. There is no real difference, either noted or read, between left hand page and right hand page positioning.

As for the font, two thirds of readers expressed a preference for serif typeface (serif is the one with feet, like this font), saying it increased legibility and recognition. With regard to UPPER and lowercase, general rule of thumb is to use how it is spoken eg "URGENT" as opposed to "Urgent".

What's The Best Medium?

All media has advantages and disadvantages. Television is entertaining and engaging (using sight, sound and special effects), but it is expensive and people have a tendency to flick channels in an ad break. Radio is mobile and speaks to you, but can be considered as background noise or wallpaper. Newspapers have a local or regional focus and because they are printed daily are very timely. But they sometimes can be cluttered. Magazines offer a lovely glossy quality and niche markets. But they can be expensive and have long deadlines.

There are two further things that need to be taken into consideration when choosing media – budget and how often it needs to be said (the

former will quite often dictate the latter). A 30 sec television spot at prime time might be the best way of reaching your market, but one spot might be the cost of your entire budget. A more cost effective option could be a series of press ads. A radio ad is appropriate for sale

time where you can get high frequency, but not so good if you have lots of information to convey. Common sense is the order of the day.

All media connects with people in different ways. Connection is a fundamental human need – people want to belong. Choosing the right medium to connect with your customers is critical to the success of your advertising and will be different with every advertising objective.

Newspapers are the number one medium used by local advertisers. Key research has shown that readers are actively involved with a newspaper - they accept, understand and seek both advertisements and editorial relevant to them. Newspapers help people connect to their world by providing content that has integrity and authority.²

The strength of the relationship New Zealanders have with their newspaper is evident in their reading behaviour. On an average day almost 1.7million New Zealanders (15 yrs+) will read a daily newspaper. Readers 15yrs+ spend 40 minutes with their weekday issue and 62 minutes reading their Saturday issue.³

Effective advertising check list

1. Set clear and realistic objectives
2. Identify your true target market
3. Communicate a single message
4. Understand the different media
5. Talk to your media representative
6. Measure your results – did you achieve your objective?

Newspapers provide an excellent opportunity to deliver your message to a captive audience.

Trust me, I'm in Advertising!

Finally, good relationships are at the heart of small business success.

Befriend your media sales representative and get them working for your business. A good rep should be flexible and offer tailor-made plans to communicate your message. They can help you devise a budget, suggest where to run the ad and on what days. They can even have your ad designed in-house.

Effective advertising is about good communication and it starts with you - what do you want, who are you talking to, how are you going to say it and what medium best delivers that message. The cheapest ad is not always the best value. Small businesses naturally have small budgets, so start small. Once you get results and see what works for you, you can make it bigger and legitimately expect bigger results.

Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising.

Mark Twain

Glossary of newspaper terms

- Column Centimetre – area that is one column wide by one centimetre deep. Ads are sold by column centimetre – eg 15 x 3col cm ad. If the rate is \$8.90 than your ad would cost you \$400.50.
- Broadsheet - the traditional big fold out style newspaper usually 55cms high x 10 columns wide
- Tabloid – about half the size of broadsheet newspapers usually 38cm high x 7 columns wide.
- Supplements & Features – special sections designed by the paper that focus on a particular subject eg gardening, agriculture, mind body & soul
- Loading – an extra cost applied to guarantee preferred positions and colour
- Circulation - the number of newspapers printed and distributed. Average Net-Paid Circulation is the total paid sales averaged by a newspaper.
- Readership - the number of people who read the paper (higher than circulation as there is generally more than one person in a household).
- Reach - The number of different persons or homes exposed to a specific media vehicle or schedule at least once. Usually measured over a specific period of time.
- Frequency – the average number of times the audience is exposed to a medium. Usually referred to as average frequency. It is calculated by dividing the Gross Impacts (total exposures) by the Reach (different people).
- ROP - Run of paper or run of press. Denotes advertising that appears on the pages of the newspaper itself (as opposed to pre-printed inserts).
- Tear Sheet - a full page torn from a newspaper given to an advertiser to show proof of publication.

Written by Lexie Ribot, Creative Manager, NAB

¹ Source: Roper Starch Reading & Noting Studies 1999

² Source: Fast Forward Reader Needs Research 2002

³ Source: Nielsen Readership Survey Feb-Dec 2003