

Advertising

What Is Advertising and How Can I Profit from It?

Advertising, defined as “the action of attracting public attention to a product or business,” is one of many marketing tools you can use to draw more customers with greater frequency. Also falling under the broad umbrella of marketing are public relations and promotional programs, signage, premiums and incentives, newsletters, trade shows and word of mouth—in short, everything you do to help attain your company’s overall goals. Ideally, your firm should invest in an ongoing, consistent marketing program using a combination of these tools for maximum impact.

What Advertising Can Do for Your Business

- Remind customers and prospects about the benefits of your product or service.
- Establish and maintain your distinct identity or “personality.”
- Enhance your reputation.
- Encourage existing customers to buy more of what you sell.
- Attract new customers and replace lost ones.
- Slowly build sales to boost your bottom line.

What Advertising Cannot Do for Your Business

- Create an instant avalanche of customers.
- Cause an immediate sharp increase in sales.
- Solve cash flow or profit problems.
- Substitute for poor or indifferent customer service.

Advertising's Two Important Virtues

You have complete control. Unlike public relations efforts, you have final word in determining where, when and how often your message will appear, how it will look and what it will say. You can target your audience more readily (working mothers, new home purchasers, small truck owners) and aim at very specific geographic areas. You can be consistent through advertising that presents your company's image and sales message over time to build awareness and trust. Similar to McDonald's golden arches, a distinctive identity can eventually become clearly associated with your company. People will recognize you quickly and easily—whether in ads, mailers, packaging or signage—if you present yourself consistently through all the promotional vehicles at your disposal.

What Are Advertising's Drawbacks?

It takes planning. Advertising works best and costs least when it's planned and prepared in advance. For example, you'll pay less per ad in newspapers and magazines by agreeing to run several ads over time rather than deciding issue by issue. Likewise, you can achieve certain economies by preparing a number of ads at once. It takes time and persistence. The effectiveness of your advertising is measured over the long run. That's because people don't see every one of your ads. They only see some of them some of the time. You must repeatedly remind prospects and customers about the benefits of doing business with you. It's this constant repetition and the cumulative effect that win the day. It is also the long-term effort that triggers recognition and helps special offers or direct marketing really pay off.

Ready, Set, Advertise!

Most of us are impatient; we want our advertising to spark an immediate sales increase. That's equivalent to giving a builder one week to construct a three-bedroom home without a blueprint. Think of the planning process as drawing a blueprint for your

advertising campaign structure. First you design the framework, next you fill in the details, and finally you begin to build.

I. Design the Framework

What is the purpose of your advertising program?

Start by defining your company's long-range goals then map out how marketing can help you attain them. Next, zero in on possible advertising routes that are complementary to your marketing efforts, and be specific. Set measurable goals so you can evaluate the success of your advertising campaign. For example, do you want to increase overall sales by 20 percent this year? Do you want to boost sales to existing customers by 10 percent during each of the next three years? Do you want to appeal to younger or older buyers? Do you want to sell off old products to free resources for new ones?

How much can you afford to invest?

Keep in mind that whatever amount you allocate is never enough. Even corporate giants such as Proctor & Gamble and Pepsi always feel they could augment their advertising budgets. But given your income, expenses and sales projections, simple addition and subtraction can help you determine how much you can afford to invest. Some companies spend a full 10 percent of their gross income on advertising, others just 1 percent. Sorry, there is no fixed rule.

II. Fill in the Details

What are the features and benefits of your product or service?

In first determining the features, think of automobile brochures that list engine, body and performance specifications or food products that detail ingredients. Another

example would be accountants whose services include tax return preparation and cash flow consultation. Now the hard part: What are the benefits of those features to your customers? How does your product or service actually help them? For example, a powerful engine helps you accelerate quickly to get onto busy freeways. Certain food ingredients are cholesterol free or low in fat to aid in staying healthy.

Who is your audience?

Create a profile of your best customer. Be as specific as possible. This answer will be the primary guidepost in creating your ads and choosing appropriate media.

Examples: A restaurant may target adults who dine out frequently in the nearby city or suburban area. A computer software manufacturer may aim at information managers in companies with 10-100 employees. A bottled water company may try to appeal to athletes or people over 25 who are concerned about their health.

Who is your competition?

It's important to identify who your competitors are as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Knowing what your competition offers that you don't—and vice versa—helps you show prospects why your product or service is special, or why they should do business with you instead of someone else. Knowing your competition will also help you find a niche in the marketplace and establish a particular positioning in your customers' minds. For example, is your product perceived as the most or least expensive? Are you regarded as a large or small company within your industry? Is your service seen as prestigious or utilitarian?

III. Arm Yourself with Information

What do you know about your industry, market and audience?

Many sources of information can help you keep in touch with industry, market and buying trends—without conducting expensive market research. Examples include U.S. Government materials from the Census Bureau and the Department of Commerce. Public, business or university libraries are also a good option, as are industry associations, trade publications and professional organizations. You can quickly and easily learn more about your customers by simply asking them about themselves, their buying preferences and their media habits. Another alternative is to hire a professional market research firm to conduct your research.

IV. Build Your Action Plan—Evaluating Media Choices

Your next steps are to select the advertising vehicles you will use to carry your message and to establish an advertising schedule. In most cases, knowing who your audience is will guide you toward the type of media that will deliver your sales message most effectively. Use as many of the tools as are appropriate and affordable. Remember that you can stretch your media budget by taking advantage of co-op advertising programs that are offered by manufacturers to encourage you to advertise their products. Although programs vary, generally the manufacturer will pay for a portion of media space and time costs, or mailer production charges, up to a fixed amount per year. The total amount contributed is usually based on the quantity of merchandise you purchase.

When developing your advertising schedule, be sure to take advantage of any special editorial or promotional coverage planned in the media you select. Newspapers, for example, often run special sections featuring real estate, investing, home and garden improvement and tax advice. Magazines also often focus on specific themes in each issue.

V. Using Other Promotional Avenues

Advertising doesn't start or stop with the media described above. Other options include imprinting your company name (and graphic identity) on pens, paper, clocks,

calendars and other giveaway items for your customers. Put your message on billboards, inside buses and subways, on vehicle and building signs, on point-of-sale displays and on shopping bags. You can co-sponsor events with nonprofit organizations and advertise your participation. Attend or display at consumer or business trade shows. Create tie-in promotions with allied businesses. Send a newsletter. Conduct seminars. Undertake contests or sweepstakes.

In addition, you can send advertising flyers along with billing statements. Use telemarketing to generate leads for salespeople. Develop sales kits with brochures, product samples or application ideas. In short, the number of promotional tools used to deliver your message and repeat your name is limited only by your imagination and the parameters of your budget.

VI. The Advertising Campaign

Armed with knowledge of your industry, market and audience, a media plan and schedule, your product or service's most important benefits and measurable goals in terms of sales volume (number of units sold), revenue generated or other criteria, you are ready for action. The first step is to establish the theme and, if appropriate, the specific tagline that identifies your product or service in all of your advertising. The theme of your advertising reflects your special identity or personality as well as the particular benefits of your product or service. For example, cosmetics ads almost always rely on a glamorous theme. Many food products opt for healthy, all-American-family campaigns. Automobile advertising frequently concentrates on how the car makes you feel about owning or driving it rather than its performance attributes.

Likewise, a tagline rests on the single most important reason for buying your product or service. "Nothing Runs Like a Deere" (John Deere farm vehicles) conveys performance and endurance with a nice twist on the word "deer." "Ideas at Work" (Black & Decker tools and appliances) again signifies performance but adds reliability and

imagination to the statement. “How the Smart Money Gets that Way” (Barron’s financial publication) clearly connotes prosperity, intelligence and success.

Preparing the Ads

The initial design of your advertising, the creation of the tagline and the tone of voice you’ll use to establish your personality are so critical that it almost always pays to have professional help. Hire the best designer and copywriter you can afford at the start. Later, you can ask newspapers, radio stations or magazines to follow your guidelines in preparing specific ads if you can’t afford to continue relying on professionals. How do you know a good ad when you read, write, design or evaluate one? Most importantly, a good ad focuses on one message: the single idea you want this ad to convey. That idea may revolve around price, features, convenience, quality, enhanced technology or a time-limited offer. Support that idea with as much copy or illustration as time or space allows. Good ads rely on “The Three Is”: **Involve, Inform and Illustrate**.

Involve the audience: A good ad arouses curiosity, lures in prospects and invites them to participate. It does that with words, images or sounds that are compelling and with information that aims at their strongest interests. Example: “Please Your Client & Your Accountant” appeals to the reader’s desire to be doubly successful by giving good service and making money.

Inform the buyer: Your prospect wants the answer to one question: “What’s in it for me?” This may be a faster, easier or less expensive way to attain a specific objective, “TransEuropa Express: The Fast Track to the Time of Your Life,” for example. It may also be something less tangible: stylishness, prestige, praise or the admiration of friends and colleagues. Look at clothing, soft drink and health club ads for good examples of this appeal.

Illustrate the benefit: Even people who aren’t paying much attention while turning the channel or the page can see your message in a micro-second if it’s well illustrated.

Effective display means illustrating not only the product or service but the benefit as well. Example: Campbell Soup Company's advertising shows mom and her kids in a traditional kitchen setting with a loving atmosphere and hot soup. Nordic Track ads portray a slim young man or woman exercising. Both imply that the customer will also look or feel that way by using the products being advertised. You can even illustrate radio and television ads with your choice of music and background sound effects.

What's in an Ad?

Print ads generally have four written parts: headline, support copy, call to action, company name and a visual. Visuals are usually more important than copy because they're more effective in attracting readers' attention and can instantly present your product or service in a dramatic and motivating way. Unless you're commissioning your own original artwork or photography, the visuals you'll use will probably be either drawings and photographs from your suppliers or non-copyrighted artwork (clip art) found in clip-art books and scrap-art computer programs. Choose the strongest visual among them, the one that best draws the eye and explains what you're selling, and then move on to copy.

The most prominent piece of copy, your headline, must not only work with your visual, amplifying its meaning, but also attract attention with a word, phrase or sentence announcing a benefit that appeals to your target market. One expert wrote that a headline is that final, mind-changing, sales-clinching comment you'd make when leaving the office of a prospect that, until then, had responded with nothing but negatives. Others point to the enduring effectiveness of the standard headlines "Sale," "Free" and "Buy now and save." Collect ideas that are right for you from your salespeople, from the ads in your file and from advertising books. And remember it is not so much the words, but the ideas they express, that sell. Determine your message then find words to convey it.

Below the headline, support copy explains the headline's premise and adds secondary benefits or any assurance readers might need to dispel suspicions that have

been raised by the headline, such as the assurance of “same great quality” when you’re offering a “new low price.” Following this copy, as a sign-off, is a call to action urging the reader to respond—“Call for an appointment today,” or “Remember, sale ends March 21.”. Your company name, traditionally at the bottom of the ad, should include your address and phone number. Make your phone number larger to help stimulate response by phone. Add a cross street to your address (e.g., “5730 Sheridan, at La Monte”) if you’re a new business or if, for other reasons, people might have difficulty finding you.

The next step is to combine all these visual and copy elements into an eye-catching, easy-to-read ad that is formatted to the dimensions stipulated by the publication. It’s best to study the ads in that publication in advance and consider what your ad might look like in order to stand out on the page. Experiment with different layout ideas rendered in thumbnail sketches and then fine-tune your ad to fit the layout you prefer. Obviously, it’s highly advisable, if not imperative, when you’re doing ads in-house, that the person composing your ad has design experience. Not only is skill required to make an ad look right, but the quality of your ad must compete favorably with others appearing in the publication.

It’s also a good idea to prepare your ad well ahead of the deadline. This way, you can put it aside for a few days and then review the ad with a fresh perspective while there’s still time to make revisions. As a final check, lay your ad on a page of the publication where it will appear and make sure it stands out from the articles and other ads on the page.

Avoid These Pitfalls

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to good advertising is excess. Ads can end up so crammed with ideas and features that they appear dense and uninviting. If over-designed, they can become more artistic than motivational, obscuring the sales message. If over-written, they can become over-subtle or over-cute. Certainly, some of the best ads ever created are clever and visually arresting; but good ads must also sell. Similarly,

selling points may over-promise. Use “largest,” “best” and other superlatives only if you can back them up. Avoid any claim that could be construed as deceptive. In addition, make sure the overall tone of your ad is upbeat and appealing. Emphasize the solutions you provide, not the problems you address. And get outside opinions on your new advertising concepts to be certain they carry the personality and message you intend.

Fundamentals of Headlines, Copy and Design

While there are many opinions about what constitutes good headlines, copy and design, most professionals agree that these individual elements of the ad must work together. In combination, they must grab attention, convey a persuasive message and portray a consistent identity. An ad that’s too cluttered can’t convey a message quickly enough to engage the reader or viewer. One that’s out of character with the product or service will be confusing rather than convincing. An effective headline (or a broadcast ad’s opening moments) must immediately capture the audience’s interest and pull them into the ad. A good rule of thumb is to look for the inherent “drama” in what you are offering and capitalize on that to create an alluring ad.

Examples: “We’re Losing Our Minds”—a university ad appealing for funds. And “You Don’t Have to Be Jewish to Love Levy’s”—a bread company ad featuring a Chinese man biting into a whopping pastrami sandwich.

Next, the photo or illustration amplifies the message. A recent ad for Bull Worldwide Information Systems, for example, showed a satellite photo of the earth with the headline “GloBull.”

Once the headline and illustration have drawn the customer into your ad, the copy convinces them to buy. So make it believable, full of information and bolstered with words and style that complement your identity. Almost any Mercedes Benz print ad exemplifies convincing copy in a style that suits the product perfectly.

Broadcast advertising will also involve selecting music, sound effects, actors or announcers and perhaps a theme song. All these elements enhance your message and reinforce your identity but, for the most part, the copy and what it conveys actually do the selling.

Measuring and Tracking Your Results

Now that you've advertised regularly and consistently with dramatic ads full of information and impact, it's time to look at the bottom line to measure results. In the short term, results are often difficult to ascertain because advertising is not a knee-jerk instrument. It is an ongoing process that is designed for sustainable results over time. However, when your ad contains a coupon, a special time-limited offer or other inducement to act immediately, you can get measurable results almost at once—provided your offer, timing and media selection were right and you had already established a rapport with your audience.

Remember that a single ad does not an advertising program make! Each individual advertising exposure, whatever response it generates, contributes to a residual result that will eventually show up at your bottom line: name recognition, reputation and trust. Establish a method to determine how customers found you and keep track of the results. Some companies routinely ask, "How did you hear about us?" of every new customer who phones or visits. Others have a "Referred by" box filled in on each invoice. Whatever system you use, unless you've done a coupon promotion and can simply count the number of coupons redeemed, tracking is the only way you can assess how effectively your advertising is working. Tracking tells you which ads or media bring inquiries and which bring sales—a key distinction. If you track by invoice, you can also determine how much revenue each ad dollar is producing.

Most important, tracking helps you decide how to readjust your advertising program periodically to make your budget work its hardest. You'll know when to discontinue certain media and publications and when to pump more money into others.

You'll also be able to see which Yellow Pages directories and headings pull hardest for you. And you'll know when results are dropping off from previously good sources, signaling that it's time to give them a rest. In the end, advertising is a trial-and-error process. You may need to spend several years trying out various advertising options and assessing results to know the target markets and media mix that work best for you.

To gauge long-term results, go back to your original benchmark. Were you successful in attaining the goals you set up? Now look at the specific advertising vehicles you employed. Which media were most effective in a quantifiable way—not for a specific ad but during your overall campaign—in terms of response versus cost expended? Which offers worked best? What pricing levels brought in the biggest sales? Did you see steeper upward curves during certain times of the year? Armed with this analysis, you can fine-tune your overall advertising program, and its individual components, for the next year or years. The value of advertising—as a complement to other promotional efforts—justifies it as an integral part of your marketing strategy. And yes, it does get easier as you test, refine, re-evaluate and measure over time.

Drawing the Advertising Blueprint

- What are your organization's overall goals?
- Which marketing tools will help you achieve them?
- What is the purpose of your advertising program? (Be specific.)
- What is your advertising budget?
- What are the most important features and benefits of your product/service?
- Who is your target audience? (Create a profile of your best customer.)
- Who is your competition?
- How are you perceived relative to your competition?
- What identity or personality do you want to project?
- What is the single most important benefit you want to convey about your product/service?
- What other benefits set you apart from the competition?

- What advertising tools will you use?

Yellow Pages	Newspapers	Magazines
Radio/TV	Direct Mail	Telemarketing
Billboards	Signage	Other
- How will you measure the effectiveness of your advertising program?

The 12-Question Customer Quiz

1. How did you first hear about our product/service?
2. Have you seen any of our advertising? If so, where?
3. What do you like best/find most useful about our product/service?
4. How could our product/service be improved?
5. What other products/services would you like us to offer?
6. What was the single most compelling reason for choosing our product/service?
7. What other reasons were important?
8. What friends, family members or colleagues, if any, influenced your buying decision?
9. What newspapers and magazines do you read regularly?
10. Which radio and television stations do you tune in to most frequently?
11. Please indicate your age and sex:

	Male	Female	
18-34	35-49	50-65	66+
12. Please indicate your annual household income:

Under \$15,000	\$16-24,000	\$25-49,000
\$50-100,000	\$100,000+	

(For businesses, omit #11 and instead ask something to indicate size, such as number of employees. Rather than #12, ask for annual sales volume.)

Six Ad Program Guidelines

If you are new to advertising, or if you're using media or publications you haven't tried before, it's important to assign your ads to outside specialists rather than try to create them yourself. These specialists may be the creative group at an advertising agency, a freelance writer and designer or the ad department of the newspaper, magazine, TV channel or radio station where you plan to advertise. Such people are experienced in translating information about a product or service, target market, U.S.P. (unique selling position) and advertising goals into advertising that suits each medium and conveys an effective image and sales message. Moreover, it's extremely helpful to work with and learn from specialists for several years before you consider doing advertising in-house.

Whether you work with specialists or create advertising on your own, here are six guidelines to follow in the development of an ad program:

1. Do your homework. Start compiling your own ad file. Collect ads you like, to give you ideas, as well as ads run by your competitors, so you can monitor what they're doing. Read books on advertising, including anthologies of the best ads of the year, and how-tos by advertising greats.
2. "Sell the sizzle, not the steak." The old rule about selling products based on the benefits and excitement they provide has proved true time and time again. So focus on your U.S.P.—and on those intangibles that motivate human behavior and generate sales. This rule does not apply to Yellow Pages ads, which do sell steak, but it remains the essence of all other advertising you do.
3. Stick to your own image and personality. Stay with the basics of who you are. Make sure that the personality and images projected in your entire advertising ring true.

4. Work as a team with your ad rep or ad agency. The best advertising results from a synergy between your business expertise and your ad specialists' advertising expertise. Carefully explain your product, market and goals, and let the ad people go from there to develop their ideas. Advertising is a give-and-take process, and both sides need to communicate and work together, without dictating, until the outcome feels right.
5. Give each advertising medium you choose a fair test. Advertising rarely brings sales overnight. Run your ad at least five times—or at least two months in weekly publications—to test out the market properly. Often, consumers need to get used to seeing your ad before they'll act on it. Results take time.
6. Don't overlook current customers. Nobody sells you better than a satisfied customer. So in your efforts to gain sales from new prospects, remember that you can build sales equally well through customer referrals and repeat purchases of existing clientele. Maintain a mailing list and, at your earliest opportunity, start producing sales notices, newsletters, catalogues or other goodwill and sales-generating materials for the customers you already have. Some of these items lend themselves to a direct mail campaign that is targeted at new prospects as well.

Cost-Effective Advertising

If you think advertising is a high-stakes gamble, one that is full of risks and gimmicks at expensive prices, think again. Advertising follows, in fact, some very logical rules. The first is that good advertising is based on market research. Before you advertise, you need to understand the customers you're trying to reach. What are their needs? What factors influence their decisions to buy? What features of your products or services offer what they truly want? And what weaknesses in your competitors could bring these target customers to you?

The second rule is that when you are advertising, particularly with different media, you must always measure your advertising results. Only through consistent, systematic evaluation can you determine the percent of return you're getting for each ad dollar spent. Moreover, by pinpointing which advertising is working and which is not, you can capitalize on your successes, cut your losses and revise your program by trying a different sales approach or different media.

Track your advertising religiously. Always ask new customers how they heard about you. Put a dedicated phone number in your Yellow Pages ad; the number of calls coming in on this line will quantify the effect the ad is having. If you advertise with coupons, count the coupons redeemed. If your advertising spotlights a certain product or service, monitor its sales.

A third rule is that like anything new entering the public environment, advertising takes time to catch on. Although some famous print ads and television commercials have had immediate impact, most advertising builds slowly through consistency and repetition. Thus your advertising must appear frequently enough to become a familiar presence; think of it as something that customers must see three or four times before noticing it's there.

Besides being logical, advertising can also be inexpensive—even free. So after you've identified your target customer and defined your strategic sales message—the prerequisites to all forms of advertising—explore the following cost-saving advertising alternatives.

Advertising Your Business

Advertising is an investment in your business and is similar to other investments that are designed to improve and expand your business. The return you receive depends on the planning and thought that precede the actual commitment and expenditure of advertising dollars. By first developing an effective advertising plan, you increase the

likelihood of a positive return on your advertising investment, regardless of the amount of money you spend.

Four Basic Questions

The basic premise of an advertising plan requires you to thoroughly analyze the answers to key questions before you can make effective advertising decisions. There are four key questions to ask yourself:

1. What do I want my advertising to accomplish?
2. Who should my advertising speak to?
3. What should my advertising say?
4. What advertising medium should I use?

In a specific business situation, each question has any number of potential answers. As you think about each question, do not accept any answer until you have considered and explored the full range of possibilities.

What Do I Want My Advertising To Accomplish?

The first step in developing your advertising plan is to specify your advertising goals. Be as precise as you can as to why you are advertising and what you want to achieve. Everyone wants advertising to increase business, but for your advertising plan to work, it requires you to be more precise. Some possible goals for your advertising are:

- To increase awareness of your business.
- To attract competitors' customers.
- To increase the likelihood of keeping current customers and developing their loyalty.
- To generate immediate sales or sales leads.

It is possible that you may want your advertising to achieve all of these goals plus some others. What is important is that you prioritize your goals. Advertising works best when it is developed to meet one specific goal at a time.

Who Should My Advertising Speak To?

Once you determine your advertising goals, you can then select the target audience for your message. Keep in mind that advertising that tries to reach “everyone” rarely succeeds. Successful advertising is written with a specific customer in mind. Try to picture the person you must reach in order to achieve your advertising goals. Try to describe your target consumers in each of the following:

- Demographics: such as gender, age, income, location of residence or business, etc.
- Behaviors: such as current awareness of your business; the products, services or vendors they currently use; loyalty to either you or your competitor’s business, etc.
- Needs or desires: such as what benefits consumers look for, the basis on which they will decide whether to use your product or service, how your business can fulfill those needs, etc.

What Should My Advertising Say?

Once you know who your target audience is and what they are looking for in terms of the product or service you offer, you can decide what your advertising will say. Advertising should always be written to communicate a message that will be seen as important by your target customer. Your advertising should clearly and convincingly “speak” to your target audience, explaining the important benefits your product or service offers. In deciding how to discuss the major benefits of your product or service in your

advertising, keep “AIDA” in mind: attract Attention, hold Interest, arouse Desire and motivate Action.

Where Should I Place My Advertising?

Every month, new advertising options become available. Beyond “traditional” media you can place ads in airports, on ski lifts and on television monitors in the front of grocery carts. Where you place your advertising should be guided by a simple principle: Go where your target audience will have the highest likelihood of seeing or hearing it. Many advertising media work well to reach a diverse range of target consumers. There is no single medium that is inherently good or bad. In fact, a good medium for one product or service may be a poor medium for another. As you consider media choices, look for one that fits your advertising goals, reaches your target efficiently and cost effectively and is within your advertising budget. Based on these considerations, the following summarizes the relative advantages and disadvantages of the advertising media most frequently used by small businesses:

Television

Television provides a means for reaching a great number of people in a short period of time. Small businesses will typically use either spot television or cable television. A spot television ad is placed on one station in one market. The number of target audience members who see your ad depends upon how many viewers are tuned into the television station at a specific time. Cable advertising is placed either on a local cable television channel or on a cable network. The number of people reached by cable advertising depends upon the cable penetration and the cable channel/program viewership in a given market. Beyond television’s reach, an additional advantage is its ability to convey your message with sight, sound and motion. The disadvantages of television advertising are its relatively higher cost—both the terms of airtime and production, its

limited length of exposure, its short airtime (making it difficult to present a complex or detailed message) and the clutter of many other ads. Television ads may require multiple exposures to achieve message retention and consumer action. Also, many commercials are considered intrusive, prompting viewers to switch channels to avoid them.

Beware of stations that nobody watches. Before making a commitment, do a quick informal survey of your customers and staff to learn what percentage of them watch the channel you're considering. What is true of advertising in general is also true for television: Advertising can work for you only if it's seen, heard or read.

Radio

Radio, like television, has the capability of quickly reaching a large number of consumers. The major advantage of radio lies in its ability to efficiently target narrowly defined segments of consumers. The vast array of radio program formats allows an advertiser to gear ads to almost any target audience. Beyond this advantage, radio is commonly used by small businesses because it is relatively inexpensive (both in terms of airtime and production costs) and because deadlines for placing radio advertising are relatively short, thereby providing an advertiser with increased flexibility. The disadvantages of radio are: 1) an advertiser is limited to an audio message so there is no visual product or service identification, 2) ad clutter can be high and 3) exposure to the message is short and fleeting. Similar to television, multiple exposures may be required for message retention and consumer action. Also, listeners may change stations to avoid commercials.

If you can find a station whose listenership matches your customer profile, radio can indeed boost sales. Bear in mind, however, that radio's effectiveness is tied directly to the time of day when commercials air and to their frequency of repetition. Opt for the time slots when your prospects are most likely to be listening and then purchase the greatest amount of airtime you can afford. If you need to economize, use shorter spots; three 10-second spots may be more effective than a single spot that runs for 30 seconds.

Newspapers

Newspapers permit an advertiser to reach a large number of people within a specified geographic area. Newspaper advertising has several advantages for the small business. First, an advertiser has flexibility in terms of ad size and placement within the newspaper. Second, exposure to the ad is not limited, so readers can take their time with your message. Finally, short deadlines permit quick response to changing market conditions. Disadvantages of newspaper advertising include: 1) declining readership and market penetration, 2) ad space can be expensive, 3) clutter of competitive advertising and 4) a relatively short lifespan (newspapers are typically read once then discarded), thus requiring multiple insertions.

Check with the advertising department of your local and regional newspapers. Get their demographics, rates and a rundown on the scope of advertising services they provide. Some newspapers, especially smaller ones, can serve as your advertising agency and consultant at no extra charge. They can usually write and design your advertising and can advise you about co-op arrangements, through which your suppliers share the cost of ads that include their name, logo or both. Some may even help you with merchandising or arrange tie-in advertising with other businesses or in other media. What's more, they can tell you from experience which of their editions and sections deliver the demographics best suited to your product or service.

Magazines

Magazines provide an advertiser with the means to reach highly targeted audiences. Specific groups can be reached by placing an ad in a magazine whose editorial content specializes in topics of interest to that target. This is true of both consumer and business publications. Placing ads in magazines that have well-defined geographic, demographic or lifestyle foci can reach audiences. Beyond their ability to reach specific audiences, the advantages of magazines include a relatively long ad life and repeated ad

exposure (magazines are typically looked through several times before being discarded), excellent reproduction quality and pass-along value. The disadvantages of magazines include long lead time, limited flexibility in terms of ad placement and format and the potential for high costs in production and placement.

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