

Other Advertising Options

Outdoor (Billboards)

Outdoor advertising is typically used to reinforce or remind the consumer of the advertising messages communicated through other media. The advantages of outdoor advertising are the ability to completely cover a market and the high levels of viewing frequency. The disadvantages of outdoor advertising are related to viewing time. Because target consumers are typically moving, an outdoor advertisement must communicate with a minimum of words. Billboard messages must be simple, direct and easily understood.

Direct Mail

Direct mail advertisers use targeted mailing lists to reach highly specialized audiences. In addition to low waste in ad exposure, direct mail provides an advertiser with great flexibility in the message presentation. The disadvantages of direct mail include the relatively high cost per contact, the trouble involved with obtaining updated, accurate mailing lists and the difficulty in getting the audience's attention. (Direct mail is often considered "junk mail.")

Yellow Pages

The Yellow Pages are an advertising medium that shares many of the strengths of other advertising media while, at the same time, avoids some of its competition's limitations or disadvantages. As such, the Yellow Pages are best used to complement or extend the effects of advertising placed in other media. Like other media, the Yellow Pages permit an advertiser to select a well-defined geographic area, ranging from a neighborhood to an entire metropolitan area. Once the geography is defined, a Yellow Pages ad has permanence; Yellow Pages are kept as a regular reference. In addition, Yellow Pages support your other advertising by providing a convenient way for consumers to contact sources and obtain information on the products or services they

desire at the precise time they are ready to “take action.” Studies on this form of “directive” advertising have shown it works so well that of the people who turn to the Yellow Pages, 83 percent then take action. Also, the Yellow Pages are relatively low in cost in terms of both ad production and placement. The disadvantages of the Yellow Pages include their lack of timeliness (ads can be changed only once per year and, as a result, there is no opportunity for “price advertising”), the potential clutter in some classifications and less creative flexibility than other print media offer.

Yellow Pages ads resemble no other kind of advertising. They’re not aimed at motivating consumers to buy a product. Rather, their goal is to convince consumers to buy a desired product from a particular company. Because companies attract business by showing they’ve got whatever consumers may want, Yellow Pages ads also tend to be full of brand names and information.

The first thing your ad must do is get itself read. Here, your success depends in part on which Yellow Pages directory (or directories) in which you choose to place your ad. The bottom line is to get the greatest amount of exposure. So, compare competing directories on the basis of their usage figures—not their distribution figures, but the number of actual consumer uses per year. If you then divide directories’ uses-per-year figures by their charge for the same size ad, you’ll see which directory provides the highest number of uses per dollar. That’s the directory that delivers the best value for your money.

Another key factor in determining whether your ad will be read is the size of the ad you decide to buy. Obviously, the larger the ad, the more attention it gets. Once you select the heading or headings under which your ad will appear—and they should be headings for the products and services that give you the greatest profitability—open to those headings and see what ad sizes your competitors have. You can then choose ad sizes larger than theirs, on par with theirs or smaller than theirs, depending on budget constraints and the competitive stance you want to take.

Once you've decided on directories, headings and ad sizes, concentrate on creating an ad that both attracts attention and stimulates customer response. Experts such as Jeffrey Price, author of *Yellow Pages Advertising: How to Get the Greatest Return on Your Investment*, say you can achieve those results by including the following in your ad:

Attention-getting artwork. Artwork is the greatest eye-catcher for an ad, after size. You can use visuals from your suppliers or even non-copyrighted artwork you locate in out-of-town or out-of-state Yellow Pages. Stick with illustrations whenever possible, since photographs may reproduce poorly. And keep areas of blank space around your artwork, and throughout your ad as well, so your ad is uncluttered-looking and easy to read.

A headline that says what makes you special. Identify the special or unique characteristic that, for your target customer, puts you ahead of the competition. Write a short, to-the-point headline stating that advantage. If your headline must focus on just one of your products or services, choose the one that is most profitable.

Include the complete information buyers need to make a purchase decision. Your ad must convince buyers that you're the best source for what they need. So support your headline with information, usually presented in list form, about your:

1. Reliability (e.g., years in business).
2. Authorized products and services.
3. Full range of products.
4. Location (with maps, when helpful).
5. Business hours.
6. Special features such as parking, credit cards honored, discounts, licenses, guarantees, delivery policies and emergency services.

Lastly, try to get your ad placed in the most prominent position possible under each heading. Since positions are assigned on a first-come-first-served basis, it's

advantageous to finalize your contracts with Yellow Pages publishers as rapidly as possible.

As is the case with newspapers, Yellow Pages sales representatives can help write and design your ad at no charge. They can also advise you on co-op advertising to maximize your promotional dollars. Some can serve as your full-service ad agency and consultant. Unlike other mediums, where your ad only appears or airs periodically, Yellow Pages gives constant advertising exposure—24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Co-op Advertising

Recent industry studies have revealed that billions of dollars aimed at helping businesses stretch their advertising budgets are going unclaimed each year because many owners don't know about co-op advertising. A relatively unknown form of advertising, co-op is a cost-sharing arrangement in which manufacturers and suppliers provide financial assistance for customers' advertising programs. It can often make the difference in whether or not a small business can afford to advertise at all. Co-op advertising works in a number of ways. For example, a retailer can buy goods from a manufacturer and accrue co-op funds based on the amount of purchase. Those funds can be returned in the form of a cash rebate, a credit to the retailer's account or in products.

Promotions

Promotions can create excitement and new business when they provide solid value to your customers. One perennially successful promotion is to declare yourself a tax-free zone (i.e., don't charge your customers any sales tax). Another is to offer a free service with the purchase of an item, such as free alterations, free installation or any other type of giveaway, such as free lawn mowing with the purchase of a new lawn mower. Still another traditional success is to run a contest in your store for free merchandise or simply have weekly drawings of customers' business cards for free services or goods.

Specialty Items

Consider using specialty items in your promotional efforts: pens, tote bags, calendars, T-shirts, refrigerator magnets and a host of other wares imprinted with your name, logo or a message. Some may be giveaways; some may carry a nominal charge. Each makes your name accessible not only to customers who use, wear or carry the item but also to prospects who see customers with it. The key to specialty items is tastefulness. You must select an item and look that customers would choose to buy for themselves and one that matches the overall message you are trying to communicate about your business and its products or services.

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