



Making a Connection

You are wasting your advertising dollars if your message isn't getting through.

By Tom Comi

It's been said that the easiest part of being a marketing manager is booking advertising space. The biggest challenge, on the other hand, is making sure the message in your advertisement is presented accurately enough to be heard.

Whether you are promoting your company via print, direct mail or online, there are several musts and must-nots that go into determining whether your campaign will be a hit or a miss. And with every dollar counting in today's economy, very few companies can afford to miss.

So what goes into making a successful advertisement? A lot of that is dictated by what your primary goals are. Is it to drive calls to your office and/or visits to your website to initiate sales? Is it about branding your company, so prospective customers remember your name down the road? Or is it a combination of both?

Scott Boudreau, operations manager for Front Door Advertising, says advertising frequently leads to better results.

Either way, there are some essentials that have to be included for your ad to work. Christopher Baird is CEO of Automatit Inc, a custom website development company in Arizona, and he advises, "First and foremost, what is being offered needs to be easily identifiable." He also said including obvious things like the company name, website and phone number are paramount.

Scott Boudreau, operations manager for Front Door Advertising Inc. in California, said his company always tells its clients to get their message out as frequently as possible.

"Consistency with advertising is key," he said, adding that his business focuses on direct mail postcards and door hangers. "Businesses put an ad out one time and expect dramatic results right off the bat. While sometimes this will occur, it may not always be the case. The customers we have who advertise every month have fantastic success. Targeting your market on a regular basis will certainly increase your response."

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Knowing and Reaching Your Audience

Boudreau was quick to add, however, that an ineffective ad will not work regardless of how many times it runs. And that theory is supported by Texas-based Agama Advertising Agency, which says that a good advertisement—whether it's print, on-air or online—does the following:

- Connects with its audience
- Is memorable and easily recalled
- Provides information quickly and succinctly
- Doesn't confuse the viewer or make them hunt for the pertinent information
- Calls the viewer to action

"It's okay to have white spaces, pauses, slow pans, or other elements that some might call a 'waste' of space," the agency says on its website. "Effective advertising does not lambaste the viewer with information; it allows room for the message to get the audience's attention and connect."

Boudreau completely agrees: "We have customers who try to cram so much information into their ads. You only have a few seconds to make an impression, so make sure you get their attention with a catchy headline, a picture, a special offer and create a sense of urgency. The whole point is to get your phone to ring and get customers in the door. If you answer every single question on your ad, there is nothing left for them to ask. The goal is to get more calls, more traffic to your website and ultimately more customers."

And converting those leads into clients is the obvious goal.



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~ Christopher Baird
Automatit Inc.

"Ultimately, the success of the ad for most people is whether or not enough viewers became customers to create an acceptable return on the investment," Baird said.

A Tangled Web

With most people owning a computer these days and the ever-growing sales of smart phones, website advertising is becoming more popular than ever. But advertising online is a very tricky proposition if you aren't familiar with the intricacies of designing a proper ad.

"Website ads need to be specific to the site they will be placed on," Baird said. "If you advertise on Google Ads for example, getting them to click would be the ultimate goal. If you have an ad on yellowpages.com, getting them to call would be more appropriate and less expensive."

Baird warned that some advertisers make the mistake of including pop-ups and animation, many of which are either prohibited by the site owner or blocked by the site visitor.

"Graphics can be catchy, but you will notice that Google offers text ads and did away with graphic banners years ago," he said, adding that some designers get so caught up in trying to be flashy that they forget to include pertinent information like a phone number.

Also paramount when preparing your online campaign is knowing the hottest trends. Larger ads were once a huge draw online, but Baird thinks that might be changing.

"Banner ads have been reduced significantly or eliminated on most websites, because text ads or paid links got a much better click-through and conversion rates," he said, adding the following caveat: "Now even text ads are getting less clicks for the same reason."

The bottom line is that your bottom line can be drastically affected by not only where you book your ads but the content you include. And whether you choose to spend your money in print or on the Web, our experts agree that the message better be concise.

"Advertising is very important to a company, but it needs to be done effectively to work," Boudreau said. "A lot of businesses just go through the motions, and all they are doing is throwing their money away. If done correctly, advertising can generate a good amount of revenue and branding." ❖