

Advertising For Small Business

New businesses especially often ignore the most basic fundamentals of advertising. No matter the size of your business, a well-developed understanding of the key points of advertising can bring huge benefits. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, 5% of a new businesses' gross sales should be set aside for advertising. Even then, a 5% advertising budget only works if you understand the key points of advertising.

6 Key Points of Advertising Success

1. A Single Message: A high response rate ad usually conveys one message only that is simple and compelling. Small business advertising needs to communicate its core message in 3 seconds or less, and that message must be easily understood and focused. (Read my article, Writing for the Life of Your Business to understand the importance of the “unique selling proposition,” or USP, in advertising your product or service.)

2. Make It Credible: It is human nature to distrust advertising, so advertising claims need to be real and credible. Any claim a customer perceives as being untrue can invalidate the ad and destroy your business image.

3. Test Ads: Small businesses do not have the luxury of wasting capital and resources on ads that have not been tested like big companies do. Measure the headline, timing, and placement of your ads by using coupons, codes, and specials. Test only one product or service at a time and one medium, such as flyers, TV or radio, newsprint or magazines. One simple test is to ask every customer for several weeks how they heard of your business.

4. Be Accessible: Every brochure, box, email and all company literature that represents your place of business should include: website and email address, phone and fax numbers and company address. It's a simple idea, but it's usually forgotten by most companies. This is one area where you can't over do it, so be obvious with your contact information.

5. Target Ads: Successful business advertising focuses on one target market only, ads tailored specifically to each market. An ad in a motor sports magazine might extol the benefits of using a quality grade motor oil. Ads in outdoor magazines might point out specific health benefits of cross-country

skiing, such as weight loss. Focus the message specifically on the target group.

6. Generate Curiosity: Successful business advertising does not sell a product or service; it compels customers into taking an interest and then motivates them to seek more information about that product or service. And that irresistible urge, when properly satisfied with the right information at the right time, can lead to sales and then return sales.

Getting a poor response to an ad is not necessarily the medium's fault. Quite often the problem is what is in the message itself, or, conversely, what is not in the message that should be. Small business advertising is only one method of marketing your company and should not be considered a quick-fix solution. Planning, testing and constant exposure of advertising are required in order for it to have a positive impact on your small business.

By keeping these six key points in mind at all times, advertising can be a winning strategy for your business success!

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