

# Fourteen Major Advertising Methods

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**Word-of-mouth** ~ Not enough can be said about the power of word-of-mouth advertising. One of, if not the most viral methods of advertising, word-of-mouth contains all the best elements of classical advertising: customer product or service endorsement; customer familiarity with product or service location; customer preference for return sales, among others. Note: if your product or service is lacking, this will work against you, so make a point of meeting and satisfying your customers' wants and needs.

**Brochures or flyers** ~ Most if not all word-processing programs are capable of producing attractive flyers and multi-fold brochures; a typical brochure is an 8.5" X 11" sheet folded lengthwise in thirds. If organized and designed properly, brochures can contain a great deal of information both inside and out, flyers, front and back, and both have become the most popular and easiest methods of advertising.

**Direct mail** ~ Mail you send directly to your customers usually is focused on how your product or service meets their specific needs and desires. Build a mailing list of your current and desired customers by collecting addresses from their checks, asking them to fill out information cards, sign-up for your mailings or a catalog if you have one, etc. Keep the list up-to-date, as it can quickly become outdated, and pay attention to mailings that are returned. Your goal here is not to inundate your customers with information, but to cater to their needs.

**E-mail message** ~ E-mail lists can be an efficient means of getting the word out about your product or service. Your e-mails should include a "signature line" at the end of each one. Most email programs are designed to automatically attach your signature line to e-mails, if you choose.

*Be careful here: with the SPAM laws in effect, advertising e-mails are required to not only be "opt-in," but they must contain an "opt-out" link as well.*

**Magazines** ~ Magazines ads can be very expensive. Research at the library or search the web for a magazine that focuses on your specific industry, useful because the magazine already focuses on your market and potential customers, and you can study the ads of your competition. In addition to considering placing an ad, write an original short article for the magazine.

Make acquaintances with one of the magazine's reporters; reporters are always looking for new story ideas and resources.

**Newsletter** ~ This can be potent means of defining your products or services for your customers. Use a professional for the initial design and layout, then ask friends or business associates for article ideas relevant to your product or business. Include coupons for discounts on your products or services; give helpful hints about your product or service. Current desktop publishing programs and some word-processing programs can generate quality newsletters very inexpensively.

**Newspapers (major)** ~ Because of the availability of information on the Internet, printed newspapers are for the most part on the downturn. Having stated that, almost everyone reads the local and/or one of the major newspapers. Placing ads, writing a letter to the editor, or getting a reporter to write a story about your product or service are all good and inexpensive ways to get exposure, since advertising costs can be high.

Newspaper advertising departments often give free advice about what and how to advertise. Knowing when to advertise though, pretty much depends on the buying habits of your customers, something you can discover from your own sales data.

**Newspapers (neighborhood)** ~ An excellent local advertising venue, but, paradoxically, neighborhood newspapers are often overlooked as an advertising method. More immediate than major newspapers, local newspapers are often closer to the wants and needs of your particular customers.

**Online discussions and chat rooms** ~ You can gain frequent exposure for your products or services by actively participating in online discussion groups and chat rooms. However, many online groups have established ground rules relative to commercial advertising. When joining a group, always study the group rules or check with the group moderator to understand what is considered an acceptable and proper post for that group.

**Posters and bulletin boards** ~ When placed where customers will actually notice them, posters can be extremely compelling, but how often have you personally noticed posters and bulletin boards? It's best to place posters on bulletin boards and those locales your customers often frequent.

Refresh your posters periodically with new and highly colorful posters that will catch the eyes of passers-by. Some businesses and municipalities, though, have regulations about posters that are permitted in their spaces.

**Radio announcements** ~ What makes radio ads advantageous is that they are usually cheaper than television ads, and many potential customers still listen to the radio, at home or in their cars. Ads are typically sold on a package basis: a explicit number of ads, with fixed time-lengths and precise air times. The biggest factor for your products or services is to get radio ads announced at those times when your potential customers are listening to the radio, something your local radio stations can advise you on.

**Television ads** ~ Many small businesses won't even consider television ads, laboring under the misimpression that TV ads are too expensive. They are more expensive than most of the major forms of advertising, yet, with the increasing number of television networks and stations, good deals can be found for placing commercials or other advertising forms in desired time slots.

**Web pages** ~ Advertising and promotions on the Internet nowadays are commonplace, and businesses often develop web pages just to appear up-to-date. Web advertising requires dedicated equipment and specialized expertise, including a computer, an Internet service provider and a website name.

Designing and installing the graphics and other specialty functions as needed, i.e., e-commerce, website promotion, search engine optimization, directories, etc., can be done by the owner, but are usually best left to professionals. It's worth the expense to let someone who knows what they are doing handle these considerations.

**Yellow Pages®** ~ A very effective advertising method, if you can get your ads well-placed in the directory's categories of services or products, and your business name is descriptive of your services and/or your ad stands out, such as, bold lettering, in a large box on the page, etc. Most phone companies will offer free advice related to designing and placing your ad in the Yellow Pages®. Many even have special packages that give your business a phone line as well as including a specified number of ads, all for one price.