

The Art Of Advertising

When you are thinking of advertising your business or service then you want to make sure that your hard earned money is going to produce results. So how can you increase the odds in your favour? In this brief article we attempt to remove some of the errors people often make when designing and placing advertising, and give you some ideas as to how you can improve your own advertising.

Designing An Advertisement

The first, and often the hardest, thing you have to realise is that your company name is probably the last thing anyone is interested in, and yet it appears on most ads in big letters at the top. Why is your name so unimportant to an advertisement's reader? To answer this you need to put yourself in the role of a potential customer. Imagine you are advertising a bar or a restaurant. Why would someone choose to come to you rather than one of your many competitors? Because you offer them something they want. It's that simple. They don't really care what you are called, as long as you can supply them what they want.

People only really buy something for one or more of three main reasons

- It's something they want
- It takes away a pain
- It brings pleasure

Note, we have not included "It's something they need". Need is rarely a reason that an advertisement will work unless you are the only place they can get the product. If you are cheaper or better value then this is something people want. If you are local and they avoid a long drive with difficult parking then it removes a pain. If you offer an easy shopping experience with happy staff then you bring pleasure, but a needed product in itself (bread for example) is simply boring as far as a reader of your ad is concerned.

So back to your advertisement. The first thing that you must do is ask yourself why you yourself would use your service. List the key points that would bring you to your business. Then ask your existing customers the same question – why did they come to you in the first place? Why are they still with you? (But ask that one carefully in case you make them wonder!) Once you have these points, then you will know what needs to go into the advertisement.

Let's imagine you are an electrician. Why would someone want to use your services instead from anyone else's? Perhaps you offer an emergency service, or you have all your staff fully qualified and trained, or you have special rates for pensioners. The list of possibilities is almost endless but I hope you can see that these are the points that will make a good advertisement.

Have you ever been told "I didn't know you did that!" Well if you have, then it shows you need to be better at telling people what you do, either by posters in the business premises or by advertising.

Where To Advertise?

There are many places in which you can place an advertisement so how do you choose? If you are looking towards advertising in a printed publication then probably the first thing to consider is the track record of the company behind the magazine or paper. If they have been publishing for a year or more then it is likely they are providing a service that works, they must be or they would not have kept existing advertisers. New publications do come along and some are very good, Mellow Magazine was new back in 2006. But some simple checks are worth while carrying out, especially when the publication is new. What were the owners doing before? Are they well known in the neighbourhood through previous business interests?

Having established a shortlist of possible publications, then the next question is coverage. How far is it reasonable to expect potential customers to travel? Or how far are you prepared to travel if you offer a mobile service? The more local your service is, the less you want to advertise in a wide circulation publication. To put this into perspective, imagine one magazine with a print run of 2,500 copies concentrated around the area in which you operate, and another with 25,000 copies printed each month covering the whole of the Costa Blanca. At first sight the magazine with 25,000 copies would seem to offer ten times more readers than the 2,500 one, but where are these readers? How many of them are truly your potential customers? If you offer a service that covers the entire Costa Blanca, then advertise to the entire Costa Blanca. If you run a bar or restaurant, then unless you offer something very special it is unlikely that people are going to drive 100km just for a quick drink or a simple meal! In this case, a publication with a smaller, and more local, coverage will give you many more readers for your money than a wide area publication.

Also worth considering is the fact that most people read all the free magazines and newspapers in their area. So a smaller, local magazine, where each advertisement is far more likely to be seen is always the best option unless you are going to benefit from a wide area coverage.

Many sales people introduce the concept of “Cost Per Reader” where the cost of the advert is divided by the number of readers. So an ad costing 100€ in a 2,500 print run magazine will give you a cost per reader of 4cents, while a 300€ ad in the 25,000 print run magazine will be 1.2 cents per reader – apparently better value. But how many of these readers are truly your potential clients? In many cases only a small number of the magazines are locally distributed so 25,000 may well reduce to 2,500 in real numbers giving a cost per reader of 12cents. Considerably more than the smaller magazine cost you. So use “cost per reader” with caution.

Do you, yourself like the magazine? Is it one you would pick up and read? Would you keep back issues for reference? Is it free to pick up, or is it a chargeable publication? Many people believe that free magazines offer a better pick up rate. Most important, is it a magazine that your existing customers read? If it is then potential customers are probably reading it as well.

Are your competitors advertising in the magazine? Do you know any of the advertisers that are in the magazine? You could talk to them and get an idea as to how well it works for them – not always a reliable indicator since their business will be different to yours, but at least you can get some idea as to the magazine and how well it deals with its advertisers.

In Summary

You need to choose your publication wisely and consider

- Track record – is your money going to a business and people you trust? And don't forget that a professional salesperson can be very persuasive – we've all experienced the double glazing salesman!
- Is the coverage of the magazine suitable for your business – it's a complete waste of money advertising to areas you don't work in.
- The readership size should be the number of potential customers not how many people read the magazine. If you are selling fast motorbikes then it is likely a younger target audience is required. If you are selling holidays for the over 50s, then you don't advertise in a magazine aimed at young people.

And design your ad with your potential customers closely in mind

- It's what you sell, not what you are called that they are interested in.
- And they will only buy if you offer something that fits at least one of the three key issues – Want, Reduced Pain, Increased Pleasure.

Most Important Of All

NEVER sign or agree to anything until you have had time to check out everything and had time to think. If the salesman or woman wants an answer now then the answer should almost always be NO. Even if they are offering all the incentives in the world then the answer is NO. If their offer is good, then they will wait, at least for a few days while you think it through. Pressure at this point indicates a salesperson with only his or her interests at heart, not yours. There are exceptions to this when deadlines are looming and space is still available, but they should be honest and tell you why they are in a hurry – and the discount should be very good in that case.