

ADVERTISING

for your small business

Improve and expand your business by investing in advertising. Develop an effective advertising plan before spending advertising dollars. The basic premise of an advertising plan requires you to analyze the answers to key questions before you can make effective advertising decisions.

1. What Do I Want My Advertising To Accomplish?

The first step in developing your advertising plan is to define your advertising goals. Be precise about why you are advertising and what you want to achieve. Goals for your advertising should be:

- To increase awareness of your business
- To attract competitors' customers
- To increase the likelihood of keeping current customers and developing their loyalty
- To generate immediate sales or sales leads

2. Who Should My Advertising Speak To?

Determine your advertising goals and then select your target audience. Advertising that tries to reach everyone rarely succeeds. Picture the person you must reach to achieve your advertising goals. Describe your target consumers in each of the following:

- Demographics such as gender, age, income, location of residence or business.
- Behaviors such as current awareness of your business; the products, services or vendors they use; and loyalty to you or your competitor's business.
- Needs or desires such as benefits, how they decide whether to use your product or service and how your business can fulfill those needs.

3. What Should My Advertising Say?

Once you know your target audience and what they want, you can decide what your advertising will say. Your advertising should clearly and convincingly speak to your target audience, explaining the important benefits your product or service offers.

4. Where Should I Place My Advertising?

In addition to traditional media you can place ads in unusual locations such as airports, skating rinks and on grocery carts. Guide your advertising placement by this simple principle: Go where your target audience will have the highest likelihood of seeing or hearing it.

Many advertising media work well to reach a diverse range of target consumers. There is no single medium inherently good or bad. A good medium for one product or service may be a poor medium for another. As you consider media choices look for one that fits your advertising goals, reaches your target efficiently and is within your advertising budget.

The following are summaries that look at the advantages and disadvantages of the media most frequently used by small businesses:


Television: Television reaches a great number of people in a short time. Beyond television's reach, an additional advantage is its ability to convey your message with sight, sound and motion. Disadvantages include a higher cost and limited length of exposure.

Radio: Radio, like television, has the ability to quickly reach a large number of consumers. The major advantage of radio lies in its ability to efficiently target narrowly defined segments of consumers. The vast array of radio program formats lets an advertiser gear ads to almost any target audience. The disadvantages are that it is limited to audio and has limited exposure.

Newspapers: Newspaper permits an advertiser to reach a large number of people within a specified geographic area. Advantages include flexibility in ad size and placement, unlimited exposure and short deadlines that permit quick response to changing market conditions. Disadvantages are declining readership and clutter of competing ads.

Magazines: Magazines provide an advertiser with the means to reach highly targeted audiences. Specific groups can be reached by placing an ad in a magazine whose editorial content specializes in topics of interest to that target. This is true of both consumer and business publications. Disadvantages are need for a long lead-time and high costs.

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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 high levels of viewing frequency. The major disadvantage is a short viewing time so the message must be simple 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. Disadvantages are high cost per contact and difficulty maintaining accurate mailing lists.

Yellow Pages: Best used to complement or extend the effects of advertising placed in other media. The Yellow Pages permit an advertiser to select a well-defined geographic area and offers permanence since they are kept as a regular reference. Also, the Yellow Pages are relatively low-cost in ad production and placement. Disadvantages include lack of timeliness and potential clutter in some classifications.

Internet: The advantages of the Internet are its ability to reach very large numbers of people as well as potential for improving customer service. The down side is that it can be very time consuming to develop and maintain. Careful consideration should be given to whether your target market is likely to be reached through this form of media. Give careful consideration to whether your target market is likely to be reached.