
How to correct common marketing mistakes.

A well-tuned marketing campaign is a beautiful thing. Your advertising not only connects with just the right prospects, but it seems everyone is talking about you, your product, or service. Sales come in at a nice pace. Profits mount as you quietly chuckle thinking how little you spent on marketing. Suddenly, moving your company forward doesn't seem hard at all...

Unfortunately, marketing rarely works that easily, at least at first. Rhonda, who is marketing director for a mid-sized business-to-business company, purchased an expensive series of television ads to boost product awareness. "I thought getting our brand in front of so many people would naturally increase sales, but it didn't happen," she laments. Big mistake!

Meanwhile, Ted, working hard to get a home-based business opportunity started, sunk his entire three-month marketing budget into a sales letter to 1,000 prospects. Only a few responded leaving Ted wondering what he did wrong. Another big mistake.

Most marketing gets held back by a few very common mistakes. Let's look at a few along with ways you can easily correct them to get your advertising back on track.

Mistake #1: Your marketing gets lost in the crowd. Each of us gets bombarded by thousands of advertising messages every day. From magazines, to radio ads, to a TV talking in the background, to the flier left in your mailbox, the daily ad barrage continues. Prospects quickly learn to ignore marketing. Prospects only pay attention to marketing that is radically different or marketing that speaks directly to their most immediate concerns.

Highly innovative marketing rarely works. It may be one of the most counterintuitive features of promotion. How many of the outrageous dot-com ads from the 1990s do you still remember?

Instead, separate your ad from the pack by making it talk directly to something the prospect really cares about. It should point out a problem your product or service can solve. Make the language of your ad sound like the way customers would describe the problem, the solution, and the way they feel after the problem is solved.

Mistake #2: Targeting an audience that is too broad. Before you can address the specific concerns of a prospect, you have to narrow the groups of people your marketing is reaching. Ted's sales letter didn't work because the list of addresses he mailed to weren't people who had already shown an interest in starting a home-based business. Many were already owners of good-sized businesses. Others were managers in companies with little time or inclination to work from home.

Ted would do better to use a more tightly targeted list of people who had recently requested information on a home-based business or had tried one or more opportunities in recent years. An ad in your big city newspaper will reach a great many people, but very few will be in the market to buy high performance wire and cable. In this case, your ad would work much better in a trade magazine targeting electrical engineers.

TV and newspapers work very well to sell products used by a large, diverse mass of people. You can target TV and newspapers further by putting ads on specialized cable TV programs or in special neighborhood editions of newspapers. Likewise, you can get better targeting and lower rates by placing ads in regional editions of national magazines.

Mistake #3: Your ad budget gets blown in a one-shot marketing gamble. This is one of the most common and often heart-breaking problems. A new store will spend everything they have on one radio remote, full page newspaper ad, or direct mailer. If the first try doesn't work (and it often doesn't), there is no money left for a second or third try.

Which leads us to the next mistake...

Mistake #4: Marketing isn't consistent. The old saying among veteran marketers is the first ad never works. You get consistent, long-term results by continuing your ad over weeks and months. It may be true that familiarity breeds contempt, but not in marketing. Familiarity develops awareness and confidence in prospects so they buy.

There are endless examples of a small inexpensive ad that appeared in the local Sunday paper every issue for years. Sales started slowly, and then built to a constant roar. I'll never forget the owners of an auto parts supplier who strongly believed if the ad didn't pull astounding results the first time, there was no use in continuing. They bounced from ads in one publication to ads in another with little to show for their effort.

Mistake #5: Marketing fails to tie different media together. Too many times the direct mail campaign a company does have little to do with the magazine ads they are running. Instead, make your ads in different media all relate to each other.

Take the audio from your TV commercial and adapt it for a radio spot. Use a still from the TV commercial in your magazine and newspaper ads. Take the still photo and some of the verbiage from your spot and use it in a direct mail campaign. The continuity will increase your chances of breaking through the marketing clutter to really reach prospects.

Keep in mind different media work in different ways, accomplishing some things better than others. Television SHOWS how your product or service works. Radio helps people know the FEELING of using your product. Newspapers and magazines are good at EXPLAINING how things work. Direct mail utilizes the power of the letter to talk to your prospects in a very personal one-on-one way.

Mistake #6: Finally, don't believe the hype that the Internet is somehow dead or dying. USA Today recently reported the number of people using the Web has quadrupled since the Internet Boom in 1998.

Huge numbers of consumers and businesses worldwide now understand the Web is a wonderful place to find a large variety, get things done fast, and uncover a lower price. Use your web site to give visitors all the information they need to understand and buy your product or service. Have your TV spots, radio commercials, print ads, and sales letters all send people to your web site where they can spend as much time as they need perusing your in-depth material.

Marketing is one of those aspects of life where the tried-and-true often works best. Use these proven solutions to common marketing mistakes to insure your advertising and promotion efforts bring the results you expect.

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