

Why Most Advertising Strategies Fail

Of the three main advertising strategies available to small business owners, the one they use the most is the one giving the worst results. Image advertising, sometimes called "space advertising", is what you invariably get if you allow a graphic designer or advertising rep loose on your ad. Usually, it's just your logo and company name, a list of stuff your company does (as if I need to be told Smiths' Fire Alarms sell fire alarms!), and maybe some irrelevant but pretty photos from some stock photo collection. As advertising strategies go, that's laughable. Sad to say, it's about the best most web design companies can manage, too (Hint: don't let ANY web designer loose on your internet marketing unless he or she really understands marketing. Most websites are nothing more than expensive space-ads in a different form).

3 Reasons Why Image Advertising Strategies Don't Work!

First it's just information. A name, a logo and a list of "stuff". No one's interested. In the rare event they find you because they're looking for you, they're still not interested in YOU. No, they're interested in what you can DO for them. They don't want the Smiths' fire alarms so much as they don't want to burn to death if their house catches fire. Secondly, image advertising is predicated on pushing your "brand". I have news for you: you probably don't have a "brand" worth worrying about. Why? Because your brand is a function of your reputation for quality and service NOT a function of how often some Brylcreemed advertising wide-boy can get it shoved in people's faces. So-called "brand consultants" will take a small (or even a large) fortune from you for doing something you can do yourself for free just by concentrating on your service to your clients and customers. And thirdly, image ads have no call to action. The best they can manage is a "please call us if there's something we can help you with". Wow. That's really going to get the juices flowing, isn't it?

Making Your Advertising Strategies Work For You

I advise all my clients and all small business owners to stop this pointless image advertising and instead go back to the basics. And it doesn't get any more basic (or more powerful!) than the AIDA principle. As you may already know, it stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, Action. And it's at the core of direct response advertising, which is the alternative to image advertising strategies. Every ad has a specific purpose and is created to appeal to a specific kind of reader. Going back to Smiths' Fire Alarms, you might expect to see an ad from them with a headline saying something like "Are Your Children's Lives Worth The Price Of A Round of Drinks?", followed by an emotional description of the horror of losing your family in a fire, assurances of how easily Mr Smith & Co. can give you peace of mind, and ending up with a specific instruction on how you must call Smiths' right NOW in case they're all sold out!

How To Make Your Ads Even More Effective!

We've vastly improved our chances of success already, but we can do even better and make our advertising strategies really rock-solid. Because we're STILL trying to sell "off the page". And that is always a challenge. A better strategy is to offer something for free, say a special report or perhaps in the case of Smiths', a free "Fire Safety Audit". The idea is to give the reader a reason for responding which is both valuable and yet entails no risk (a purchase always involves a risk to both buyer and seller. As the seller, most of the time you have the disadvantage because you need to sell more than the buyer needs to buy). Business is about relationships, because we buy from people we like and trust. In doing things this way your advertising strategies mean you're immediately taking the first step in beginning that relationship by giving. So, experiment your advertising and see how you can turn them from image ads to ads which actually benefit the reader, not only by reading but by responding to. Now is a great time to be doing this, because not only is advertising space very cheap because of the recession, but most of your competitors will have stopped advertising completely so you'll have the field to yourself. Try it. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at the results.

About the Author

Jon McCulloch is the hottest marketing sensation in the UK and Ireland and is now taking the US by storm. Get the hottest advertising strategies and tips from Europe's leading direct marketer here: www.small-business-marketing-tips.com

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