

## **How small businesses can use Advertising to its full potential**

Advertising is one of the main marketing tools to use when marketing to your customers and potential customers. Think of advertising as your representative e.g. your advert represents you, your product and your company when you cannot be somewhere in person.

Therefore think about what you want to say and what you want to achieve through your advertising.

Like all tools, there are things to be aware of to ensure you maximise your marketing effectiveness to maximise the return on investment. Use these top tips from Nicole Martin, managing director of Pinpoint Marketing Consultancy Ltd as questions to ask yourself to help you decide which advertising strategy works best for you and your business:

### **Where do I place my advert?**

You need to think carefully about where to place your advert. Who is my target audience/s? Is it male golfers, small businesses with fewer than 10 employees, families based in London or all women aged 25 to 40?

What magazines does your audience read, what newspapers do they buy, and what websites do they log onto?

Other factors to consider are where do your competitors advertise, do you need colour in your advert, do you need to show any moving images, do you need to include a tear off coupon?

Research the various mediums open to you before placing your advert.

Look at things like circulation figures for geography, readership demographics for a reader profile. Ask to see previous examples so you know what the readers expect to see in terms of pictures, layout and so on. Is the medium trackable to allow you to measure your adverts' effectiveness?

Research into the options to advertise e.g. if you wanted to advertise to golfers on a national scale, a good place to start would be an industry related magazine like Golf Monthly. However, within this title there could be many options such as a traditional printed ad (with further options of size, format and location), or perhaps you could run a banner ad on the magazine's website or have a printed insert or write some editorial.

Plan ahead. Some magazines and newspapers have long lead times. Some directories like Yellow Pages or Thomsons stop accepting advertising listings more than 6 months in advance of going to print.

### **What should my advert say and look like?**

- Think about the customer's needs when placing your advert. Think about what, how, when, why and who.
- Make sure your advert grabs the customer's attention and interest. The content must then create a desire within the customer to then take action. Getting the customer to take action could refer to anything from buying your product to completing the form to emailing you to clicking a link and so on.
- Don't just promote the features in the advert, but include the benefits e.g. the feature could be

the vacuum can pick up dirt at twice the speed of its competitors. The benefit, e.g. the reason the customer will buy this product is it will take them less time to vacuum the house.

- Remember the golden rule. Refer to YOU all the time. e.g. instead of writing something like we want to tell you about ....., write you need to hear about ....., Turn the emphasis on the customer.

- Add a reference number or code for the customer to quote when contacting you as a result of this advert. This word or number will give you a reference and an idea on the success of the advert e.g. how many adverts were placed versus how many responses you received.

Include your contact and company details.

### **Are you ready to buy your advertising space yet?**

- Buy in bulk if your budget allows you too. Many advertisers will discount or offer packages for multiple weeks or slots. Ask before you commit.

- Know how the advertiser needs to receive your copy and images. Do you need a designer to help you make your file print ready?

- Have you got all applicable quotes in from suppliers such as printers and designers as well as from the media itself? Have you checked these against your budget? Have you tried to negotiate costs?

Log onto the website for the ASA (Advertising Standards Authority) for further hints and tips and compliance guides - <http://www.asa.org.uk>

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### **Pinpoint Marketing Consultancy Ltd**

07523 569288

info@pinpointmarketingconsultancy.co.uk

www.pinpointmarketingconsultancy.co.uk



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