

First in a series of articles.

“Advertising for Results”

by Ian Grace, International Advertising Expert

Which half works?

People are often heard to say “only half my Advertising is working, but I don’t know which half” – sound familiar? With careful planning and following some basic rules of Advertising, you could ensure all your advertising dollars are being spent effectively – achieving the results you desire.

What’s your image? - Consistency for success

Before you place any Ads, work out what image you wish to project to existing and prospective customers. Then work with a graphic artist, newspaper art department, or Advertising Agency to design a professional logo and a consistent style of advertising.

Once you have settled on this logo and style, then tie it in with every other promotional item you display, whether it be car signage, business cards, letterheads, store signage, leaflets or website.

Size doesn’t matter

Regardless of advertising budget, people will always complain there isn’t enough and that if they had more money and could run bigger ads, they would be more successful. When I worked in South Africa for many years, a colleague of mine grew his office furniture business into the biggest in Durban, South Africa, using Ads that were merely 5 centimetres deep by 2 Newspaper columns across.

However, his logo was professionally designed, his type style and layout of Ad was always consistent and put together professionally, before presenting to the Newspaper.

The result? Regardless of the size, his company was always seen as projecting a thoroughly professional and concise image.

Target for results

One of the secrets of successful Advertising is, by knowing your own business, to target your advertising very specifically at those prospective customers who are most likely to have a need for your product or service and be satisfied by what you have to offer.

This is absolutely vital, as many businesses waste time and money trying to reach people who will never be profitable clients.

Analyse your customers

Break your prospective customers down into the following areas: -

1. Geographics

Where do your customers come from? – if you identify that the bulk of your customers come from within a five kilometre radius of your business for example, then it is pointless to spend your money targeting an audience that is outside that area. In this instance, it would be extremely cost ineffective to advertise in mass media covering the whole of your city for example, as probably 80-90% of your money is being wasted, put in front of people who would never come to your part of town to buy. Effective Advertising would be confined to your local area and personal contact by mail and phone.

2. Demographics

Here we are identifying prospective customers by sex, age, income. If your business is mainly derived from women, then talk to them about what is relevant to them. If you have a predominance of younger people as your market, don't talk to them about what's relevant to older people. When it comes to income, don't talk over the heads of those who may not be able to afford what they can only dream about.

3. Psychographics

Here we are talking about people's habits and lifestyles. For example, an Advertising Agency Account Executive and an Intellectual, who both may earn the same annual income, would often have totally different habits and lifestyles. A product or service that might "turn on" the one, may leave the other cold.

Appeal to the Emotions

People buy emotionally and justify logically. Appeal to people's senses and feelings. All too often, Ads talk about what things are i.e. the features, rather than what they will do for the prospective buyer. Sell them a picture of what the product or service will do for them as opposed to what it is. People, in real terms, are never actually buying the product itself, but merely a picture of what it will do for them or a picture of themselves enjoying it. Sell them the picture and you've won them.

The picture is the **benefit** to them and that is all they are interested in. Remember, only **benefits** can satisfy people's **needs**, not features.

Reach

Once you have decided who you wish to talk to and what you want to say to them, you need to pick the media that will reach enough of that particular market.

Specialist journals for example, will reach exactly the market you are after. If for example you were appealing to Doctors, then medical journals may be exactly what you need. If you are appealing to outdoor lifestyle type people, then perhaps camping or adventure magazines might reach enough of exactly the kind of people you are after.

Within Newspapers, you can begin to choose specific sections, for example, sporting sections for prospective customers who enjoy sport. Perhaps social pages for the ladies and other specific men's, women's or children's interest sections.

Then, place an ad that is relevant to that section and the market who reads it.

Frequency for results

Once you have established the medium or media that will reach enough of the particular target market you are after, the next thing is to run your Ads with enough frequency to give people time to react.

We are told that people respond around about the third time they have seen the identical Ad. So if that's the case, on average we would look to run the identical Ad 4 times to be slightly above average.

How to lay out your Ad

Headlines, we are told, only pull one out of five people further into the Ad. This means 4 out of 5 people glance at the first words at the top of an Ad, mentally decide it's not for them and move onto the next one. The sad thing is, they may have been just the prospect you were after.

So, forget your logo at the top of the Ad, unless maybe you're as big as Woolworths. Your headline and photograph (or illustration) need to attract people to the Ad where they make a conscious decision to read further.

Then comes the body copy of your Ad, giving the features and **benefits** of your product or service to create the prospective customers' desire.

You then need to enthuse the prospect to react now and then, logically, at the base of your Ad, is the full contact information. Perhaps the person's name they need to contact, the logo, the address, phone numbers, relevant times and directions where necessary.

Headlines are vital

If the headline is what attracts somebody to the Ad and determines if they are going to read further, then it is without a doubt the most important component of your Ad and needs to be maximised. Some basic rules of headlines are:-

Qualify

- The meaning of the headline should be qualified as soon as possible, so that whatever the reader thought it meant when they saw the headline alone, is confirmed almost straight away, so they know that the writer of the Ad and the reader are on the same wavelength.

Reinforce

- The headline should also be reinforced at the base of the Ad, reminding the prospect of what attracted them to the Ad in the first place.
- Headlines should contain one or more of the following:-
 - * Benefit or implied benefit
 - * New, news or topical
 - * Curiosity

Prospective customers are only interested in “what’s in it for me” and the headline of an Ad ideally needs to throw out some kind of promise that would be relevant to the prospect’s needs, or a possible solution to a problem they are experiencing.

As an example, a headline such as: -

“Announcing the all new computer software package that will save you time and money”, has all three elements. The **benefit** of saving money; announcing that it’s all **new** and the **curiosity** element – “how will it save me time and money?” – to find out, the reader must read on.

Beware when it comes to curiosity – don’t interpret that as an excuse to use gimmicky Advertising.

Gimmicks that don’t relate, for example, “sex” – “now that I have your attention I am talking about something totally different” may momentarily attract people’s attention but will then turn them off as they feel misled.

Use your headline and illustration together

We see many Ads where the headline and photograph or illustration bear no relationship to each other. The job of the headline and illustration **together**, is to attract readers to the Ad and they should work with and complement each other to this end.

Bewares

- In your Ads, use one or two type styles only, not a whole bunch of them, wrongly assuming it will attract people to your ad – it looks untidy, unprofessional.
- Stay away from capitals – using all capitals to make a statement stand out really only makes it difficult to read – upper and lower case is normally much better.
- Don't cram – let your Ad “breathe” with a little white space around the words and pictures rather than trying to cram every square centimetre of your Ad – the end result, confusion.
- Beware of reverse type – too often people use heavy reverse type (white on black) wording, thinking again that it will stand out. However, it is very often difficult to read and off-putting.

We hope there are a few points in here that will help you, and in future articles we will look at issues such as: -

- Choosing your media
- Media mix, tying your media messages together
- Domination rather than waste
- How to turn Ads into Campaigns
- Budgeting your Advertising spend for best results
- Creating the perception of spending more than you really are, and more.

Ian Grace conducts training throughout Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA and UK. In the Real Estate arena, he is known as “Mr Real Estate Advertising” internationally. In 2003, he became one of only two non North Americans ever, to be invited to speak at NAR (the annual National Association of Realtors Convention – the world's biggest), in the USA.

He also conducts powerful “WOW” Customer Service training programs that were nationally accredited throughout Australia, to Newspaper, Motor, Retail and Real Estate Industries and blue chip Corporate clients.

His range of world first Real Estate Advertising support material can be purchased direct from his website. He can be contacted at: -

Ian Grace Marketing

Phone (61 7) 3715 8630
Fax (61 7) 3715 8650
E-mail amazing@iangrace.com.au
Website www.iangrace.com.au