

Do-It-Yourself Advertising

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Content provided by The Edward Lowe Foundation

89 percent. That's a big number. And yet, studies show that 89 percent of everything you see and hear is forgotten after 72 hours — almost EVERYTHING!

To prove the point, how many ads can you remember that you heard this morning? Saw today? Probably not many... and you consider your advertising campaign a waste of money!

So, you want to design your own marketing campaign? Place your own ads? Not a bad way to save money, because you know your business better than anyone else. You are responsible for presenting a professional image of your company (at all times), and consistent coverage with various forms of media can certainly help you reinforce those positive thoughts.

Remember what advertising can do for you:

- build an image/credibility
- expose you or the marketplace
- get you potential customers via leads/responses/inquiries

Conversely, realize what advertising can't do for you:

- give benefits where there aren't any
- force proper to contact you
- sell your product by itself
- it won't guarantee your business — but it can get you noticed!

Advertising vs. PR vs. Marketing — what's the difference?

Advertising provides information about your company or service using different forms of media (such as print ads, radio spots, video or TV commercials, electronic postings, billboards, or other specific "types" of ads).

Marketing is the act of selling to specific, targeted groups via targeted advertising. Direct mail campaigns contain advertising material, but are known as a form of marketing.

Public relations involves building an image campaign and getting known in your field of work and your local community. True textbook

definitions say that public relations cannot be controlled; if this is true, why are there so many "Public Relations Counselors" in the Yellow Pages?

Time and Money: The Two Biggies

Frequently, small business owners ask: How much time should I spend on advertising/marketing? There are no hard and fast rules, but you need to constantly look for new business while maintaining the old clients at the same time. Between 20 and 40 percent of your time is not uncommon, and it is recommended that a minimum of 10 percent of your total work hours be spent prospecting for clients. Budget for time invested as well as dollars; don't forget to determine how much your time is worth, and include it in your overall cost of marketing and advertising.

Repetition — tell 'em what you want 'em to know, tell 'em what they just heard, and tell 'em again — is a key component to success. Although audio, video, outdoor, and print media all have different rates, you should realize one thing they have in common is quantity. Remember the rule of 20? That 80 percent of the work gets done by 20 percent of the people? Well, it applies here... 20 exposures usually leads to one inquiry, and even then, you don't know if they're a qualified prospect or not.

Another favorite question is "How much money should I spend?" This one varies, too, according to the type of business, the market, and the amount of sales. A range from 3 to 12 percent of gross receipts is a good figure for starters; you will know after a year or so if you need to increase or decrease your marketing budget.

Marketing is an investment strategy, similar to the poser of compounding. Your logo, which appears on your letterhead, business cards, and direct mail, coupled with your telemarketing and networking efforts, is one way to build your overall company image. You must plan and budget for your specific industry. For example, a bridal store is a retail business, with seasonal influences. A plumber who depends upon contractors and others for his work will find that the Yellow Pages are an excellent resource for him; they're not particularly important for hairdressers. After all, how did you pick your last hairdresser? Your last plumber?

Cost comparisons vary a great deal. In the Wilmington market, here are some examples of how you can spend advertising dollars:

Direct Mail is one of the most cost-effective methods of advertising; hence, it has had an unmatched boom in growth over the last few years. For example, 1,000 pieces could feasibly be designed, printed, and mailed for as little as \$1.52 per piece [\$0.75 printing costs + \$0.32 postage + \$0.40 Layout and Design + \$0.03 handling charges via mailhouse = \$1.52 for 1000 pieces, estimated]. Of course, a 4-color piece is more expensive than a 1- or 2-color job.

Newspaper/ROP refers to "Run-of Paper" ads, which mean you don't

have any control over their placement within the publication. All newspapers charge by the column inch (a full page of a regular size paper is equivalent to 129 column inches), and most papers give discounted rates for multiple runs of the same ad. Sometimes, you can place an ad as an insert or into a zoned section of the paper for less money. Be sure to ask for a current rate chart, and remember that if any agency places an ad for you, their commission is usually 15 percent.

Small, weekly newsprint publications, such as the *Hockessin/Greenville Community News*, cost considerably less than larger papers; however, the circulation is usually in proportion to the cost. With base rates of \$5-\$8 per column inch (per week), these weekly newspapers are usually effective for realtors and retailers targeting specific zip codes or communities. A 1/4 page ad runs from \$117 to \$188 per week, a 1/2 page ad is \$204 to \$376 per week, and you get a sizable break for running a full page — only \$408 to \$753 per week.

The Wilmington News-Journal, which heralds itself as Delaware's only statewide daily newspaper, has a complex rate sheet which breaks out Sunday rates as well as contractual arrangements. Since most newspapers have higher weekend circulation's, the ads are more expensive; e.g. \$65.30/column inch daily as opposed to \$77.15/ column inch Sunday. Your rates can go as low as \$9-\$16.10/column inch in the zoned Crossroads section (1x/wk to specific neighborhoods).

Try these numbers out for comparison for a regular black and white newsprint ad in the *Wilmington News-Journal*:

1/4 page = \$2057 1st run; 25 percent discount 2nd run

1/2 page = \$3957 1st run; 25 percent discount 2nd run

full page = \$7088 1st run; 25 percent discount 2nd run

Directories/Booklets are often sold or given away to members, with advertisements designed to help offset production costs of the piece. Expect to pay from \$250 to \$2000 for a 1/6 to a full page ad, not including layout, design or typesetting costs.

Flyers/Brochures/Newsletters are another cost-effective form of advertising that allows you to maintain regular contact with a broader group of people. Depending upon amount of time you pay for design, the type of paper used, printing costs, and the overall "look" of the piece, you can spend anywhere from \$0.50 to \$10 per piece on these items. Be sure to consider your method of distribution when calculation your costs.

Letters are sometimes considered part of direct mail, but a good personalized piece can stand on its own. You'll want to use bond letterhead, a matching envelope, and, of course, a laser printer to produce your salutations in an acceptable business manner. Budget from \$1-\$25 per piece of these items.

Yellow Pages are vital to many businesses. With the expense of your monthly business line, you get a 1-line listing under 1 heading of your choice in the big yellow book. To make your name bold, (still a 1-liner) plan on forking over an extra \$22 per month. For up to 5 lines in a box, you'll spend \$54/month; a 1/4 column ad runs \$144/mo. (With another \$62/month for red ink, your second color). Full page ads aren't for the timid — at a current cost of \$1875/month in one color and over \$3000/mo. With all colors, you can definitely spend some big bucks here. However, your costs are fixed throughout the calendar year and for some competitive industries, the yellow pages are a must.

Classified Ads are available in newspapers, magazines, and some trade publications. Like anything else, prices vary from \$5-\$500 per week (or month), do shop around and see if these are a viable form of advertising for your industry.

Signs (including billboards) are helpful for some businesses, and are usually included in an image campaign. To sum it up, KEEP it short; the fewer the words on a sign, the easier it is to read (especially if the reader is moving). Your letters will need to be large (30" on most billboards) and your logo, if any, can serve as your artwork.

Electronic/Online postings depend on the service. Bulletin board postings on the Internet are usually free; Prodigy, America Online, and CompuServe have limited advertising for shareware products and other reader services. You definitely need catchy headlines to get read online; there's so much information out there for the uninitiated.

Point-of-Sale/Trade Shows refer to the types of advertising materials that people will pick up or see either while they are buying your product or looking at it via the cash register, mail order package, or trade show booth. Expect to spend from \$250-\$1500 for the booth space alone; color ectachromes (those big posters backlit with fluorescent lights) can run from several hundred to several thousand dollars, depending on the photography and size of the transparency. Brochures or handouts at the cash register can be quite inexpensive, and are effective for restaurants and other types of retail establishments.

Telemarketing is experiencing tremendous growth, due to auto dialers, computerized calling systems, and relatively cheap costs (from \$1-\$15 per call). It is usually most effective for gathering information. Be prepared to set up the databases yourself, plan on lots of retraining (there's a high burnout rate due to so much rejection), and be sure you have a good script.

Radio is one of the key "reach and frequency" mediums. AM is much cheaper than FM, usually due to the different demographics and the lower wattage (thus fewer listeners). Costs range from \$25 for 30 seconds of airtime on AM to \$115 per 60 seconds on FM; 15-40 repetitions are recommended for a single spot.

TV has many different options these days. The "still frame" advertising is the least expensive, and ranges from \$45-70 per 10-30 sec. Still frame. You must provide photos and 10-15 words; a minimum of four weeks is the recommended term, with 13 weeks preferred. For an actual commercial, airtime costs anywhere from a few hundred to a many thousands of dollars, depending on when (and what channel) your spots air. These costs do not include video production, which ranges from \$100-\$10,000 per minute. Believe it when they tell you that infomercials aren't cheap.

Networking, or Word-of-Mouth (WOM) advertising, is a bargain (\$10-\$200 per event), but again, it is not appropriate for many types of businesses. If you're selling buildings to international markets, for example, going to your local Chamber of Commerce meeting will probably not be effective. On the other hand, networking at trade shows can really pay off — if you carry business cards or brochures to distribute, cruise around and meet a lot of people, ask questions about what they do, and follow up. If you can train yourself to make notes on other people's cards and send personalized letters within two weeks of meeting them, you'd be amazed at how your contact network will grow.

Ad Specialties are often overlooked as a "real" form of advertising. Putting your name and company logo on anything from a pencil to a canvas bag can be effective, with prices ranging from \$0.20 per item to \$35+ or more. The more useful the item, the better your chances someone liking it and *using* it, thereby promoting you. Some people swear by ad specialties; again, think about your customers.

One of the hardest things to do in advertising is to determine the type of advertising that's right for YOUR business. Start with a wish list of everything, then prioritize by *cost* and *competition*. Don't choose things you can't afford, and look at your competition: what are they doing? You need to make a presence, but you don't have to mimic everyone else in your field. Don't forget to go fishing: and try 3-5 things and see what works best; one method usually is not enough.

Commitment is the other "C" word. You must plan to expose people, so remember that it will take you 20 times to be noticed. Realistically, you can't evaluate any piece of advertising in less than 90 days; six months is a good checkpoint, and also review the results of the piece after one year. Review the amount of money you spent vs. The number of referrals, leads, and sales generated; if you're not asking customers how they found out about you, this process becomes even more difficult.

Why Do I Need A Marketing Plan?

Simple — to make the most of your money. You can spend many thousands of dollars each year on advertising, so you need to decide what kind of commitment you'll make to this expense.

You can hire someone to write a marketing plan for you, or you can do it yourself (with a little objectivity from your friends). If you pay someone to write a plan for you, it will cost between \$1250-\$5000; if you write it yourself, plan on putting in some time (15-40 hours) on this project. The basic components of a marketing plan include:

- **Background** — What are you all about? Who are you trying to reach? What are your customers like now? What kind of customers do you want? What makes your product or service better? What are your credentials?
- **Market** — How does your competition approach the market? What makes them better or worse than you? How are you different? What makes people buy your product/ service? What geographic market are you going after? How do people find out about you?
- **Creating a Business Image** — Do you have a logo? A business theme? Do you need price lists? Flyers? Brochures? Any type of printed material? Is your image carried through by your employees? Your vehicles? Your paper? Your dog? What do folk think about you now?
- **Timing and Commitment** — What do you need to be doing now? 3 months from now? 6 months from now? Is your business seasonal? Do you have walk-in traffic? Chances are there are things you can do now and later to accomplish your goals — and you need to plan for them. Direct mail is not the only way to reach potential clients, and you may even be newsworthy — you just need to know it. Press releases don't cost you anything, and they have lots of credibility. If you don't know how to write one, get a book on the subject... you have to read before you get published.
- **Budget** — By the time you get finished answering the questions above, you will have several options in mind as to what will work well for your advertising strategy. Decide how much money you can spend, and when you can spend it — you're on your way!

Do I need to hire someone for marketing?

Depends on how objective you are. If you're the kind of person who cannot write well, concisely, or have trouble getting your ideas across in a formal manner (e.g., print), maybe you do. On the other hand, if your business does not require a full-blown ad agency, there's a lot you can do yourself. You can job out the parts requiring special expertise. (Video/TV production, brochure writing, etc.)

Writing Ad Copy That Gets Read

WIIFM. You'd better learn what those letters stand for, because "What's In It For Me?" is the #1 question asked by most consumers. Be sure your marketing materials answer it.

Here are some critical components for good ad copy:

Who/What/When/Where/Why

Yes, these 5 W's are the basics. Try to answer them before your begin writing; your mind will be clearer.

- **Headlines/Opening Statements** should be strong. Here's where the creativity comes in... would you be more likely to read... 10 Tips for Improving Sales or Barbara Dodd's Suggestions For Betty Copywriting? Would you prefer to eat Raspberry Ice or a frozen dessert?
- **Benefits** are the basic story as the customer sees it (WIIFM). One key factor: Don't focus on you — focus on them. If you have the name of your company repeated over and over, the customer usually tunes out, and they definitely won't remember anything of benefit to them. Which car dealership was it that offered such a great deal last weekend?
- **Exact Offers** should state what you're selling. Exactly. If you're offering an incentive, do it here... such a 2 for 1, or getting a valuable free gift upon arrival.
- **Guarantees** can be effective in building credibility for you and your company. If you stand behind your work or your product for a specific period of time, say so.
- **Call-to-action** refers to HOW you want people to respond. Do you expect phone calls? Letters? Have you requested a fax? Make it easy for anyone to understand what they should do to either buy from you or get more information.
- **Name of your company** needs to be included; work it into the copy once or twice with your logo somewhere on the screen or page (if feasible).
- **Location** is important for writing or if you expect deep-in customers. It is not particularly important in on-line services or where people contact you via other methods.
- **Phone numbers** should always be included. Why? Because it's fast, easy, and 99.5 percent of the people in America have one. Check yours to be sure there are no errors.
- **Unique Advantages/Differences** should answer the question: why is yours special? If you do something different from the competition, tell people. Point out how your product or service is better.

- **Themes** are very important in building an image or in a campaign (such as Q and A, mini-story, or items that build to a conclusion). Themes are used all the time in retail (obscure holiday sales, End-Of Year/Month Closeouts, Going out of Business, etc.) but not as often in other businesses. Can you work from a theme, or do you need to? Will your customers buy because of it? Clover Day really isn't a day, but Strawbridge and Clothier customers know it means a big sale. Last of all, do your customers care if there's a theme?

Frequently Asked Copy Questions

1. **Is short or long better?**

Usually, lots of short pieces are easily digested. (Think about the Publisher's Clearing House sweepstakes package). However, different copy I needed for audio/video; print needs to be clean and concise. Billboards want the least copy — 5-10 words is best.

2. **What is teaser copy?**

It is a "mystery" tag line to get you to open the piece or pay attention. It's used all the time... in car ads, on the outside of envelopes, and especially in radio and television (don't go away... O.J.'s dog is interviewed next on Hard Copy!)

3. **What are good responses?**

It varies according to the type of medium used. In direct mail (print), 1-2 percent is considered good. In the yellow pages, you may get only .00005 percent of the owners of the phone book to contact you. Telemarketers tend to make 20 calls before they reach one person; 100 calls before they get one appointment or sale. Again, you have to be willing to play a numbers game; nothing is a sure hit.

4. **What kinds of words need to be in my copy?**

Some adjectives, some nouns... but never basic, boring, unenthusiastic words. There's so much out there today that you have to do things to be different — in both your wording and your presentation. Here are some excellent examples:

Free
Last chance
Save
Limited-time offer
Introducing

Easy
New
Hurry
Improved
Today

5. What kind of structure do I need?

There are some basic parts to writing advertising materials. In addition to the who/what/when/where/why questions, evaluate your junk mail for these components:

- a. Teaser
- b. Salutation
- c. Get reader interested and involved
- d. Benefit (enticement)
- e. Call for action/response
- f. Easy, clear response method
- g. Time limit
- h. Postscript

6. What is camera-ready art?

It means that a printer (or someone else) can either shoot or scan the art with no changes. Camera-ready is typically high-resolution film or velox paper, and you get much better print results by providing camera-ready originals for print media reproduction whenever possible. Jagged edges and fuzziness can occur if your art has been output at low resolution or with poor reproduction; be sure to ask for at least two camera-ready copies of anything you have designed.

7. How do I design direct mail? Other types of advertising?

OK, here we go on Design 101. First of all, use your common sense and ask the basic questions:

- Who is my audience?
- What are the top 3 things I want them to know about me and my business?
- What types of media are right for my customers?
- What does the competition in my field do?
- How does this advertising piece relate to my overall marketing/pr strategy?

For print media, think about the method of distribution... mailed? What day of the week does it arrive? How much other mail (and what types) are people getting? Does it get read?

There are some basics for print media (see sidebar), but in any format, remember to:

- Talk directly to your audience in a tone and language they will listen to (PhD's with Neon-colored paper is a no-no; so is sending multiple syllable words to those with lower education levels).
- Be a helpful colleague; your reception will be warmer.
- Position your product/service as a leader by the message you send and the story you tell. Consumers can pick up on "falsehoods" or things that don't sound just right.
- Create a sense of value for your potential audience. Show how you can meet their needs (benefits again) even if they haven't thought of them.
- Humor is OK if your potential clients won't be offended, If in doubt, call a few folks and ask them — don't print 10,000 pieces to find out you have to throw them away!

Experiment. Turn OFF the computer, get out a piece of paper, and scribble down ideas for artwork, copy, etc. It's a good way to organize your thoughts, and you'll be better prepared to complete the job once the computer's up and running.

You can learn how to do your advertising. It's not easy, but most worthwhile things in life take time (and energy) to learn. In business, there's an old saying: either you're quick or you're dead. You will have to do some form of advertising, even if it's very low-key (like networking with business cards). You can increase your knowledge and expand your education by:

Keeping a clip file allows you to analyze the work of others — but the really exciting, great pieces and the really bad stuff. Save your junk mail for three months, and you'll have a wealth of ideas from which to pick and choose.

Reading books and meeting people is a cheap (and interesting) way to learn. Get involved in a graphics/desktop publishing/advertising forum via an on-line service. You'd be amazed at what you can pick up by asking some questions and just reading what's been posted. Ask people who have good looking materials how they got them that way. Also, go to seminars when they're in your area — you can learn from others.

Using contrast and restraint is hard, but it's important; more is less in almost all forms of advertising. Good design should be transparent; you want potential customers to read the piece and remember the message.

Follow-up is critical; broadcast advertising will not get results unless you have materials to follow up. Again, it's part of the plan — be sure you budget for handling customers once they arrive!

Since frequency and repetition are key components of any good advertising campaign, be sure your marketing plan includes a timeline. Remember, you must expose your company/product to the public a certain number of times before there'll be any recognition; even then, there's no guarantee that people who contact you will be "qualified" leads. Don't forget about 89 and 72: you must be consistent, committed, and organized to get advertising to work for you.

Be creative! Be flexible! Most of all, give it a TRY — you're the business owner, and you know your prospects, your competition, and your market.

About the Writer: Barbara S. Dodd is the owner of Print Solutions, a firm specializing in the writing, layout, and design of marketing materials that get read. Based in Delaware, she considers newsletters, brochures, and presentation graphics to be her forte. With over seven years of experience in desktop publishing, Barbara enjoys creating clear, concise print media for small businesses. This article was originally published in the 5th Anniversary Edition of *Entrepreneurial Edge*.

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The Edward Lowe Foundation was created by Ed and Darlene Lowe in 1985 to "champion the entrepreneurial spirit." Headquartered near Cassopolis, Michigan, the foundation works with entrepreneur support organizations nationwide to encourage peer learning among second-stage business owners. Before his death in 1995, Ed Lowe, the creator of Kitty Litter, had become an advocate for entrepreneurship as the key to the success of the free-enterprise system.

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