

10 WAYS TO STRETCH AD DOLLARS

By Kevin Nunley

Smart business people are always looking for ways to make their dollars go further. That's particularly true with advertising. You want every marketing tool to work at maximum efficiency.

Here are simple things that will make your ad budget do extra duty:

- Cut out media that's not working or duplicates other marketing you're using. Is there an ad tool that you thought would work but didn't after giving it a good go? Cut it out!
- Use more of the marketing methods that ARE working for you. If it works, increase it.
- Make your ad better. Is there a way to make it easier to relate to or easier to understand? Are you advertising the parts of your business that make money?
- Think of ways to make different marketing tools compliment each other. In marketing it's called synergy.
- Turn your name into a trusted brand with a consistent message and reliable follow-through.
 - Remember, ads should lead to good service.
- "When should I buy advertising for my business?" It's a common question and a good one. People are a little shocked when I say, "Advertise last." By that I mean buy ads only after you've exhausted all the free promotional methods available to you.
 - Marketing tools that cost next-to-nothing are flyers, phone calls, e-mail to those you know, interviews on radio, and press releases to the newspaper.
 - Only after you've got those almost free tactics in place can you start to think about paying for ads. Paid advertising allows you to say exactly what you want, where you want, when you want.
- Once ads are in place, leave them there. It takes lots of time for advertising to do its job.
 - You may not see big results until an ad has appeared over and over, sometimes for months. Pulling your advertising before it's ripe can mean a complete waste of your ad investment.
 - That's why my advertising rule is "Advertising: Last In, Last Out." Start with free creativity, and then stick with your ads until they work.
 - Get your ad noticed. It can be tough when you're a small business with a limited marketing budget. Classifieds and small display ads in newspapers and on the Internet can get lost among all the other ads. Before you can sell, you have to get the prospect's attention. That's why it's so important to make your ad SHOUT your most impressive benefits.

- What does your business have that will impress people? Lower prices, better service, a better product?
- Take that most important benefit and stick it in your headline, right at the beginning of your ad. If there's space, remind readers again toward the end.
- A man showed me a classified ad that wasn't getting much response. Buried down in the middle of the copy was a quick mention that customers could win a free TV, computer, and game system.
- I changed the headline of the ad to "FREE TV, FREE Computer, FREE Nintendo!" Now THAT's something that gets attention. Don't keep your best benefits a secret.
- The one thing your ads must do. Do you remember when the game show "Let's Make a Deal" first premiered? In those early shows, no one wore goofy costumes (as later became the standard). Contestants were picked from the audience at random.
 - One day an audience member tried to increase her odds of being picked. She wore a goofy costume to get noticed. It worked! There is an important lesson here for anyone who wants their advertising to work better. Before you can sell to someone, you FIRST must get their attention.
 - Common sense, right? It's surprising how often we fail to spend enough time getting the prospect's attention before we jump into the sales pitch.
 - With our lives crowded with commercials, ads, and e-mail messages --most people tend to ignore anything that doesn't stand out from the pack. You don't need to dress up in goofy costumes (like the game show contestant). But you DO need to work to make your ads a little different. It's the key to getting attention--the first step in selling.
- Think TV, radio, and newspaper advertising is too pricey for your small business? That may be true most of the year, but during the first months of the year ad revenues drop way off. Big media are looking everywhere they can to sell advertising. And that means lower rates and special deals. So, when you are putting your advertising budget together for next year, plan ahead of time! The year 2000 is only four months away!

Keep in mind that media advertising is not priced like items at a department store. Rates are flexible. The ad cost that a media sales representative quotes you may be higher than what 80% of their clients are paying. Ask for a lower rate. Find out if you can get special low rates for buying multiple ads or commercials at different times of the day.

Some media outlets offer packages that include trips and vacations at the beginning of a new year. Many small businesses find that they can get the advertising they want AND get a trip to Hawaii.

And remember, just because customers may not be buying as much in the first months of a new year, they are still using media and thinking about purchases for the months ahead.

© Kevin Nunley helps businesses and organizations get the most for their media ad dollars, and provides money-saving marketing advice, copywriting, and web site design. His marketing tips and articles appear in more than 200 business publications.

Copyright © 2011. Women's Enterprise Centre is the go-to place for BC women business owners for business loans, skills training, business advisory services, resources, publications and referrals. For more resources to start or grow your business, visit our website at www.womensenterprise.ca or call 1.800.643.7014.