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# Business BEAT

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**Current Issue** Do-It-Yourself Print Advertising *by Carol Arnold*

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Although precise numbers were yet to be released by press time, it is expected that \$248 billion was spent on advertising in 2004. However, the advertising market has changed drastically in recent years and because of advertising inundation, gone are the days of being able to advertise and see immediate results unless you have millions of dollars to spend.

What's more, advertising and specifically print advertising, can be an expensive form of marketing for any business when taking into account the costs of hiring an advertising agency and advertising space charges. Most small businesses cannot afford to plunk down thousands of dollars for a campaign that may get them little results. By setting a budget, knowing a little bit about the market being targeted, cutting out the middle man (i.e. the advertising agency) and putting on a creative thinking cap, a business owner or manager can create an effective campaign.

Effective advertising includes more than merely creating an ad and placing it in your local paper. After determining a budget, one must be able to identify the business's typical customer looking at demographics including age, gender, where they live, etc. The media outlets that are ultimately chosen to place ads in should target these typical customers as should the content and design of the ads so as to appeal to that audience. As a second step, uncover where and in what competitors are advertising as this will give an indication of what should be done like or unlike what they are doing.

Now that the necessary legwork is complete, it is necessary to identify newspapers and/or publications to advertise with. For example, if a business's typical customer is a 35-year old married female with children, you may want to consider advertising in the local daily paper, a regional parenting publication, or a regional food and/or travel publication.

Once a list of prospects has been determined, extensive research into each publication is necessary, including circulation and readership demographics, advertising rates and size options, their history, current advertisers, etc. Using this information, determine the best advertising schedule, basically a plan of attack of where and when you will advertise. Bear in mind that research has shown that people need to see ads several times before

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responding and do not put all of your eggs in one basket. A better strategy is to run less expensive, smaller sized ads on a more frequent basis in as many publications as possible, in lieu of running less frequent, larger ads in a select few. Advertising agencies typically put a lot of science into determining a media schedule; however, a small business advertising campaign can be just as effective if following these guidelines.

Now comes the fun part, deciding what to say in the advertisement and how it will look. This is usually known as the design process. Some publications will provide this service, some for free and some for an extra charge. Because what is said in an advertisement is even more important than where it is published, and some publications may require that the ad be provided in a specific format, at this stage one may want or need to hire a professional to create the ad. There are many good local graphic design firms or even freelance professionals that can assist with this. If going it alone, creative content and design that speaks to the audience being targeted is of utmost importance. There is a lot of advertising out there, and the more creative one can be to stand out, the better.

Advertising is complex and this is merely meant to be a starting point to get your small business advertising campaign off the ground and running. As with any form of marketing, advertising includes testing media outlets and different types of advertising. Continually monitor your results, adjust your schedule and be as creative as necessary to maximize your advertising dollars. Best of luck!

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