Advertising Media for Small Businesses

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Small businesses face the ominous task of promoting products and/or services with limited funds. The most effective (and cheapest) form of promotion is “word of mouth.” If an individual has a positive experience, it is estimated that he or she will tell 12 people. A business must ensure that the customer’s experience is positive. Everyone connected with the business is a salesperson, regardless of his or her job description.

In small communities television advertising has become economically feasible with local cable operators. The advertisement needs to be professional. The name of the company should be mentioned in the first few seconds of the advertisement, repeated in the middle and again at the end.

Comparative advertisements, ones in which the name of a competitor is mentioned, are generally not effective.

Radio is a good advertising medium. However, you need to know the market segment of the station. Is this the audience you hope to reach? If so, create a professional advertisement. The voice on the radio is the most critical aspect of a radio spot. Some companies avoid the typical radio DJ voice and use someone who is a little different in pitch and accent.

Print advertisements have the advantage of permanence. Unlike TV and radio advertisements, which are good for a short time, print media is effective as long as people keep reading. Be aware that newspapers tend to appeal to an older market.

Businesses with limited budgets can run small advertisements throughout the newspaper instead of one large advertisement or place an ad in the classified section, which costs less and is widely read. Newspaper advertisements tend to be more effective for frequently purchased products, special events and seasonal surges of sales. Magazines are less time sensitive. They are usually retained longer than other print media and may be viewed by a larger audience. Local community magazines are an excellent vehicle of advertisement. These magazines can be found in many waiting rooms. People will pick up the magazine, and once again all those advertisements are working for companies.

Billboards can be effective for hotels and restaurants that hope to attract travelers passing through a community. They also serve to remind the local community of established businesses or introduce them to a new business.

To be effective, a billboard should have the name of the business as its focal point, a short message and the location of the business. Businesses situated on frequently traveled roads have a golden opportunity to reach thousands of people every day by placing signs close to the roadway.

Websites are imperative for most businesses, allowing small businesses to compete with large companies. The website does not need to be elaborate. It can provide information about the company, products or services, prices and instructions on ordering products or services by phone, fax or through the website.

A website can even offer a more expanded product line and can be accessed in the physical store. If a product is offered that is not normally stocked, the store simply orders the product from its supplier. The store appears to carry more items without additional inventory.

Do not overlook direct mail. It is possible to purchase a mailing list for most demographic breakdowns. A good direct-mail piece allows a business to target specific customers.

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