

Getting your message across

In the previous article you identified who your customers are and what they want. Here, Sylvia Luckman shows how can inform them about your products and services with a careful balance of marketing, promotions and PR.

In order to induce people to spend money with you, it is first necessary to get their ATTENTION, then you have to create an INTEREST that will in turn make them feel a DESIRE to carry out an ACTION – namely, buying from you. This is known as AIDA.

The message you are trying to get across should be clear as to what exactly your products are. Who your message is destined for: like an age group, a specific occasion or just everyone. What you want their reaction to be – just to admire your business or to get them to spend money with you. Finally, the message has to include why they should do it – is it because you are the best, because you give good service, because you have a larger stock than anyone else or perhaps have more knowledgeable staff?

Then the question of how much money you should spend on this has to be addressed. This is rather like asking how long is a piece of string. If you are promoting costume hire, you can think of it in terms of the amount you get for a number of hires. A £100 advert = x number of hires.

It all comes down to what you think you can afford. One thing is sure, though, it has to be specific advertising to produce action, not just generic statements.

There is no hard and fast rule for this spending. Even among the largest companies this varies dramatically. Their budgets, based on a percentage of sales, are something like:

Automotive industry: 1-2.5%

Beer:	4%
Cigarettes:	4.5%
Entertainment:	1%
Procter & Gamble:	14%
Unilever:	7%
McDonalds:	20%
Department stores:	2%

What sorts of things can we do to keep expenditure down? Here are some options to consider:

- Word of mouth – you are your own advert.
- Write letters to your local newspaper and local magazines.
- Join the local Rotary Club.
- Join the local Chamber of Commerce.
- Register yourself with your local radio station as an expert in your field.
- Get on the list of speakers for the Women's Institute, Townswomen's Guild etc.
- Get your staff to deliver your business cards or leaflets to local large businesses for display in staff coffee rooms or social club, especially for run up to Xmas.
- Support your local schools – give them gifts for their fetes to get a programme mention.

- Have a good costume or decoration to donate for charity events with your name on it.
- Place attractively designed postcards in shop windows within the radius of your shop.
- Advertise the sale of specific items in your local paper's classified section – a planned series of advertisements is always better than just a one-off.
- Place an 'A' board outside the shop during opening hours, if there is space.
- A staff member dressed in a costume could hand out balloons printed with the shop details around the town centre.
- A website is a must.
- A Yellow Page advert is much better than just the free listing.
- Use an advert for a staff vacancy as a means of communicating your business.
- Give away promotional items with your details – there are lots of ideas in promotion company brochures.

Jean Sykes of the Little Emporium in Worthing has promoted her name by using local radio phone-in programmes to join in on-air discussions; she will be asked what she does for a living, which gives her the opportunity to mention her business.

One important piece of advice given to me by an advertising man was that in creating a visual advert you should resist the temptation to include lots of information and use up every available bit of space – rather leave some white space to make the important points more easily assimilated.

The type of advertising you do is better for different messages:

Announcements are better by poster – like your A board.

Argument – that you are better etc is better done in the press, preferably if you can arrange some free editorial.

Association – famous people have visited your shop – these are better with either word pictures on radio, or in actual pictures for newspapers or TV.

Attract customers by all of these methods, and other means, to come along and visit your shop. When they arrive, are you absolutely sure you are not letting yourself down? Is the image you have created by marketing, advertising and PR better than the actual reality? Sometime ago I prepared questions for you to ask yourself to give you the power to see yourselves as others see you.

For a copy, please contact Sylvia Luckman at either sylvia@mailbox.co.uk or by phone on 020 8977 0609.