



PROMO POWER

Top of Mind Awareness

By Larry Mersereau

I recently spoke for a group of Midwestern ice cream shop operators. If ever there was a seasonal business, this is it.

As we talked about positioning their business against some pretty formidable competitors, it came out that most of them did zero advertising and promotion in their off season. Yet the national leader in that business (I bet you can name them!) advertises all year. In fact, unlike most of the operators in the audience, they are open all year.

That means that every Spring, these folks have to start from ground zero with most prospective buyers in their market...while their big competitor has had a strong market presence all winter.

You can't afford to stop communicating with your customers and prospects for four or five months at a time, no matter what business you're in. In fact, I don't ever want you to hide yourself away for even one month.

People have short memories. And, they have limited capacity for brand names. If you want your name to come to mind when they're ready to buy, you have to be in their thoughts regularly all year. Even if they only buy once a year, as is the case with many of the meeting planners and sales executives I market to, they have to be reminded month in, month out, that you are ready and uniquely positioned to serve them when the time comes.

To do that without stressing your marketing budget, first identify which of the advertising media available to you is likely to be seen by the largest number of your regular buyers. (If you

sell business to business, you would pick a business publication, no?) If it's a medium that's kind of hit-and-miss, like newspaper or television, you have to be in more frequently. People aren't as likely to see you every time as they probably would in a monthly.

Place a smaller ad if budget is the issue. Repetition is more important than size.

Once you select your media, commit to a long-term relationship. Sign a contract so you won't be tempted to pull back if business slows down. You'll get the added benefit of lower rates that way, too.

Now that you have your media selected, you have to prepare your promo pieces. Ads, mailers, videos, whatever you're using, should have a consistent look and feel. By that, I mean that every time the prospect sees or hears you, they can recognize you immediately. If you're in broadcast, use the same "talent" in every piece. If you're on the radio, the voice that reads your script and your supporting music should always be the same. In print, you use the same border, layout, fonts, and colors. This simplifies your life, too. You don't have to reinvent yourself every month.

Repetition is important, but repetitions don't accrue if you look different every time they see you.

Don't wait until your prospect is making the buying decision to contact them. Be in front of them constantly throughout the year. Establish a consistent "look and feel" so they'll recognize you immediately every time they see or hear you. You'll be in their thoughts throughout the year, and your name will be closer to that "top of mind awareness" we know will give you the best shot at the business. ■



BONUS Tip

The best attention-getter for a print ad is a good photograph. Use professional photos of models who look just like your prospect. If you market to middle-aged men, that's the kind of people you want in your ad. If you market to a range of ages, include a small group whose makeup reflects your customer base.

Why do this? We are all drawn to people just like ourselves. Think about it. When you read the morning paper, if you see a photo of someone just like you, you are going to stop to see what it's all about.

And, to get maximum value from the photo, have your models demonstrate the benefit you're promising in the ad. You may show them using your product, or basking in the afterglow having used the product already. Put a little emotion into your ads with great photos.

Want a source for great photos that won't break the bank? Check out istockphoto.com. Great photos of any kind of person you want, doing just about anything you can imagine, cheap!