

***BEST DARN CONSULTING Co. PERIOD***

# **Media Buying Guide**

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# Don't Make Dumb Media Buys

For the novice advertiser, and even the more experienced, media buying can be a real trap. Once a business decides to advertise for the first time, a plethora of ad salesmen suddenly appear at the door. They paint rosy pictures of what results you can expect and attempt to pressure and confuse you until a purchase is made. Now, please realize that most ad salesmen are not necessarily trying to mess with you, but in many cases, they *are* looking out for their own interest first ... and yours second. Most media salespeople are probably honest and really believe that their radio station, newspaper or whatever, is the correct medium for your advertising. But you've probably heard this trite cliché before ... 'When you're good with a hammer, everything looks like a nail.' In this case, the salesperson is the *hammer*. Can you guess who the nail is?

## **Example Of A DUMB MEDIA BUY**

A particular company bought ad placement on a freeway billboard and had hastily signed a 12-month contract. Why? Because the billboard sales rep said it was a great deal ... *only* \$500 bucks a month. He had told the company that *such-and-such* number of cars drive by that spot per day, per week, per month and that the cost per thousand exposures was next to nothing. So, the company proceeded with the purchase based on this without any further research or consultation. If research had been implemented, it would have quickly become logically clear that a billboard was completely inappropriate for their particular industry. Well, consequently the billboard failed to reach the company's target market. Even worse, the owner instantly blamed the *message* that was written, even though it was some excellent copy, instead of evaluating the medium the message was on.

What the company had failed to understand was that there are several different parts of an advertisement that must all work together simultaneously. And that there's a big difference between the medium and the message! In this case, the message was fine, but the **medium was dumb**. The worst part about the billboard was that it was a cross-reader, or in other words, on the left side of the freeway, located over 150 yards off the freeway, and in a position right behind a bridge so that you could only see it for about 3 seconds when you came out from under the bridge ... *if you could see it at all*. No wonder it was *only* \$500 a month. What a great deal, huh?! But even at the bargain price of \$500 a month, that still adds up to \$6,000 a year ... which was marketing dollars that should have been spent generating customers from other advertising mediums better suited for their type of business.

About a month after the dumb billboard buy, the same company bought ANOTHER ad that made no sense ... this time it was a full-page ad in one of those relocation magazines that realtors put together that nobody ever pays attention to. This time, the damage was "only \$450." As simple as it sounds, here's a quick rule of thumb: If nobody's going to see it or hear it – WHY BUY IT?

## **Another Dumb Media Buy**

A Lexus dealership ran \$47,400 worth of ads on one radio station that *supposedly* reached upscale people. But the ads didn't seem to attract many prospects or new customers. The radio station didn't use a direct response mechanism, so it was tough for the dealership to tell if their ads were pulling at all. Then, of course, there was another overlooked minor detail - their ads were terrible. Just a bunch of platitudes and generalities. Anyway, after about a year of placing these bad ads on this radio station, the dealership finally decided to poll their customers and find out if they heard their radio ad. The results were surprising ... *only 6 out of 458 people who responded said they even listened to that station* ... at all! And none of those six remembered hearing the ad! Lexus' target market listens to a variety of music ... but NOT the easy listening music that "rich" people are supposed to. Remember, BEFORE you make an advertising buy, think it through and do some research. Or get ready to throw away a lot of money.

# How To Investigate The Media You Buy ... BEFORE You Buy It

There are two basic ways to make sure that you make good media buys:

1. Ask Your Customers Which Media *They* Pay Attention To.
2. Do A Little Investigative Work.

## **Ask Your Customers**

This is really quite simple; all you have to do is ask your customers basic questions like ...

"What magazines do you read?"

"What radio stations do you listen to?"

"Do you read the local newspaper, and if so, what sections interest you?"

"Do you use the Internet?"

"Do you read email newsletters, promotions, ads, etc.?"

"What books do you enjoy reading?"

"Are you likely to attend a seminar?"

"Do you reference the Yellow Pages?"

These are just some suggestions. You want to incorporate any other questions that would be helpful to your type of situation. These questions may sound uncomplicatedly simple, but many advertisers just don't do it. They would rather gamble their budget on their *own personal opinion* about their customers will respond to instead of dealing with the facts. Just like the Lexus dealership - they never asked. They assumed their customers listened to a particular radio station. Sure, the radio salesperson had plenty of data and statistics to back up the claim that rich people listen to his station. But that didn't necessarily mean that the rich people who would buy a Lexus listened to that station. You have to find out more information about your target market. How do you do that? Listen closely: JUST ASK YOUR CUSTOMERS!

## **Danger Will Robinson - Danger**

One warning or point of clarification when it comes to asking your customers: If you are asking YOUR customers what they respond to, do not automatically assume that if they say they WON'T respond to a certain medium that the medium WON'T work. Let us give you an example. We take surveys at our workshops to find out this type of information for our own business. We ask what radio stations they listen to, what newspapers they read, and on and on. We found that a high percentage of our seminar attendees say they DO NOT read local business journals, like the *Portland Business Journal*. About 10 to 15% say they *never* read it. So here's the question: Does that mean that if we run an ad for our workshops in a business journal that it won't work? Answer: Maybe, maybe not. Maybe the way we've generated leads in the past (via certain other mediums) didn't get us the crowd of people who read business journals. Now if 80% of the attendees said they read it every week that would be a good indicator. But here's the point: asking is a great way to find out what will and won't work. It doesn't stop there though; you've still got to do some investigative work too.

## **Example Of A Good Media Buy**

A great example to illustrate this point is that of a client who manufactured rubber stamps. You know, like the kind you stamp on the back of a check or something. They wanted to be in the yellow pages, but they didn't know what section they should put their ad in. Do you put it under R for "Rubber Stamps" or just S "Stamps" or O "Office Supplies" ... or what? What do you think the right answer is? They had been in the "Rubber Stamp" section the previous year and didn't

get very good results. But this year, their marketing had been rewritten so they were excited to get more calls. You play the consultant right now. How do you find out which yellow pages section to stick their ad in? Use your imagination a little bit. You can't call his current clients because chances are they just call the company when they need a stamp. They don't look in the yellow pages at all. So now what?

Here's what we did. We had someone on his staff randomly call 150 businesses out of the phone book and ask this simple question, with no introduction. As soon as the person answered, they asked, *"If you needed to order a rubber stamp, what section of the yellow pages would you look in?"* Knowing that the person answering the phone, the receptionist, was often the person who ordered the stamps anyway, made this a pretty fair survey. Guess what the results were? First of all, just about everyone they asked - answered. Then almost 75% said they would look under "office supplies." Total time investment, about 4 hours. But those four hours made a big difference that next year. We can't emphasize this enough: Take the time to ask and save yourself a lot of headache.

## **Investigate The Medium**

To investigate a medium, start by calling other businesses that are currently advertising in the medium you are considering and ASK how it's going for them. If you're planning on running radio ads on a certain station, call some of the advertisers currently on that station and ask them how it's going. Same thing for newspaper or yellow pages or anything else. Here are some questions you can ask them:

"How long have you been advertising here?"

"Does the investment pay for itself?"

"How many inquires, leads or sales do you generate from your ads?"

"How long do you plan on staying with this particular medium?"

You don't need to talk to all of the advertisers. Some of them won't want to give out any information. But if enough do, you'll get the real scoop on the performance of the medium.

Another investigative strategy is to check medium history; how long advertisers have been with a particular medium. This is easiest if it's a printed medium such as magazines, newspaper or yellow pages. Just save the back issues or research them out - maybe at the library or at a university. If it's TV or radio, you can still find out by **ASKING** the sales rep. If the sales rep knows that the true facts might cost him a sale, he may not be very willing to share this kind of information. Take this as a negative sign. If the sales rep does give up favorable information relatively easily, that's a good sign.

## **In Conclusion**

Researching the media you are thinking about buying probably seems pretty obvious. But the fact is that most people just don't go through the effort to do it right. Then they wonder why it feels like they're throwing their advertising money down the toilet. You'll find that these little tips will tell you, with a great degree of certainty, what has worked and what hasn't worked for others before you. So be a sleuth, and do a little investigative work before you plunk down your cash.

If you are interested in learning more about how to select the correct media for your marketing, give us a call at 307.222.9579 or check out our MONOPOLIZE Your MARKETPLACE events and programs at [www.bestdarnconsulting.com](http://www.bestdarnconsulting.com).