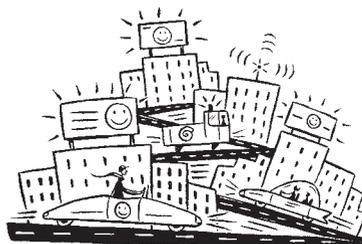


“There are painters who transform the sun into a yellow spot, but there are others who, thanks to their art and intelligence, transform a yellow spot into the sun.” Pablo Picasso, Artist



## Creating advertising that sells

Advertising can really make a tremendous difference to your business. An advertisement can help generate an increase in cash flow, but it can also have a negative impact on your business. Frightening, but true. This is why advertising seems such a mystery for many small business owners.

So what are some of the rules for successful advertising?

1. Get the message right
2. Know who your ideal customer is
3. Make sure your advertisement is seen
4. Make sure your message is seen often
5. Give your advertising time to work, and continue to refine it.

### **1. Get the message right**

It is important to summarise the essence of your message in one or two sentences. This is often known as the ‘elevator pitch’. In other words, if you were in an elevator with your ideal customer, what would you say to them to interest them in your business?

### **2. Know who your ideal customer is**

See chapter 7.

### **3. Make sure your advertisement is seen**

This is the essence of this chapter. We are getting bombarded with various advertising messages every day. According to leading Australian media agency Mitchell & Partners, Australians are subject to some 1,500 commercial advertisements from mainstream media every week. According to consumer research company Yankelovich, in the United States this figure is actually between 3,500 and 5,000 marketing messages per day. This may seem a lot but consider the advertising messages and logos we see at the ATM, at the supermarket check-out, through paid-for product placement on our favourite TV show and in sponsored SMS messages on our phones. By now it is probably evident how much your message has to stand out in order to get through to your audience. (More on this in chapter 11.)

### **4. Make sure your message is seen often**

This means how many times people hear, see or read your advertisement. In marketing terms it is called ‘frequency’. The more exposure your advertisement has to your ideal customer, the better your chances of them noticing it. Often this means using a variety of advertising media, such as newspapers and radio. (More on this in chapter 11.)

### **5. Give your advertising time to work**

A long-term commitment to advertising, let’s say over a period of six months, is more likely to have an impact than a short, sharp burst. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, it takes today’s average busy

person time to notice your advertisement. Secondly, a longer advertising cycle can help demonstrate your business’ longevity, which can result in trust. Finally, it should allow you to refine your message and where you advertise, based on feedback.

Some business owners wait until their business is in trouble to advertise, then only do so for a short period of time. Then they blame their advertising for the state of the business! The reality is advertising can work if you do it well and give it time.

### **Writing your advertisements**

Let’s consider some ways to write the best possible advertisement and communication piece for your business. We will start with the most important part of any communication – the headline.

#### **Writing headlines**

The headline can be the singularly most important element of any selling message whether written or spoken. The headline is where you should begin your conversation with a customer. It is the first thing you should state when recording a television commercial, or when meeting people at your trade show booth display. The purpose of a headline is to grab your customer’s attention. Your headline should target your customer with laser-like accuracy. One way to do this is by addressing your audience. For example, if you want to reach car owners, put the words ‘car owners’ in the headline. It should immediately and clearly tell the reader the essence of what you are trying to say in the body of your advertisement. The headline should offer the reader a big benefit right upfront. Every headline or opening statement should appeal to the customer’s self-interest. If possible, try to add some educational or informational content as well.

How many words should a headline be? When crafting a headline remember two key rules:

1. Ensure the headline is clear and clearly displayed
2. Ensure the key points are positive and personally beneficial to the target audience. You want them to feel as though the ad is written especially with them in mind.

Marketer Jay Abraham says the two most valuable words you can ever use in the headline are 'free' and 'new'. Other terms you could include are how to, now, announcing, introducing, it is here, just arrived, an important announcement, improvement, amazing, sensation, remarkable, revolutionary, startling, miracle or miraculous, magic, offer, quick, easy, simple, powerful, wanted, challenge, advice, the truth about, compare, bargain, hurry, and...last chance.

Always incorporate your unique buying reason into your headline. And make that reason as specific, desirable and advantageous to the customer as you possibly can. People are usually looking to gain advantage. We want results, benefits, pleasure or value. We want to avoid pain, dissatisfaction, frustration, mediocrity and unpleasantness. Avoid headlines that don't mean anything unless you read the whole ad. If you don't attract the audience's attention immediately with your headline, they are not likely to pay attention to the rest of what you have to say.

Be specific. Being specific right up front provides the reader or viewer with context. They can start to visualise the result, and they are likely to want to hear, see or read more. Headlines should contain words to make you want to find out more. They should also be specific. 'We'll help you make more money in 30 days' is appealing, but by presenting a solution to a specific problem: 'We'll help you pay the rent', you are more likely to reach your target audience. Australian direct marketer Peter Sun says good headlines explain how your customer can save, gain, or accomplish something beneficial through the use of your product. How could it affect his or her mental, physical, financial, social, emotional or spiritual stimulation, satisfaction, well-being or security? In short, good headlines spotlight the greatest 'benefit' you are offering a customer. Or, if you take a deliberately negative approach, they point out how the reader can avoid, 'reduce' or 'eliminate' risks, worries, losses, mistakes, embarrassment, drudgery, or some other undesirable condition by using your product or service. Whatever product or service you are selling, always, when constructing your headline or opening statement, try to remember this: Your customer is not buying a product or a service, they are buying a result. Always focus your headlines on the benefit or specific result your customer will receive from purchasing your product or service.

Use 'You'. To create a powerful headline, your message must convey benefits the customer can expect to receive. Your headline or message should not talk about 'we' or 'our' product, service or company. Each and every possible benefit or result must be written or expressed with the beneficiary's direct interests in mind. When you read a newspaper, you scan headlines to identify stories of interest to you.

Headlines should appeal to your audience's self-interest by highlighting a benefit. Here are some of the basics:

- Could it save them time? Make them money? Could it make them more beautiful? Or healthy? Will it give them more kilometres per litre? Or a whiter wash? What will it do for them?
- Don't worry about the length. Fourteen-word headlines get almost as much readership as three-word headlines. It is more important to get your message across than worry about the length of the headline.
- Put news into the headline. The news can be an improvement of an old product, the announcement of a new product, or a new way to use an old product. We are always on the lookout for something 'new'. Something that will benefit us.
- Never use headlines that are tricky, confusing or incomplete in their message. You are competing with a lot of other headlines in a newspaper or magazine. Most people are busy and read too fast to figure out what you are trying to say. They are likely to move on.
- Never use headlines that need readership of the rest of the advertisement to be understood. You are likely to lose readers. Again, most people are too busy and read too quickly to be bothered to keep on reading to find out what you are trying to say.

For the body of your ad, try to write in 8, 10 or 12 point type. Most of your reading is done in newspaper-size print. You will usually find oversized-type does not pay. Double your size and you double your cost. If your story is interesting, people should read it in their usual type. If it is not, they are unlikely to read it in any size type.

Don't use capitals. Most of our day-to-day reading is done in upper and lower case type. We are used to that. Reading capitals can take time to adjust. You may lose readers as a result. Follow the natural and usual format.

Non-specific claims don't count. Give actual facts and figures where you can. To say something is: 'The best in the world' or 'Nearly 7,000 have been sold' or 'Great service' is unlikely to make an impression. People can't relate to non-specific claims and may lose respect for you for perceived exaggeration.

Factual and accurate statements such as: 'People from 38 countries have tested our product' or '6,586 have been sold' or 'You'll have it delivered in 4 hours or it is free' are more specific and therefore more likely to be believable. It is very important to remember whenever you are making any claims or statements (whether in headlines or elsewhere) they are factually true and accurate. Here are some of the basics:

- If you demonstrate your factual research by saying: 'Our product will last up to 37% longer than similar products', people will realise you have made comparisons and may be more likely to trust your offer. Remember you need to have evidence to back up these types of claims!
- Prevention does not sell effectively. Cure does. Often we will wait for a problem to exist before we solve it, but as soon as a problem exists, we look for a solution. Focus on solutions.
- Learn which headline most appeals to your target customers. You can dramatically improve the results of your ad by changing your headline. A headline can act as a flashing light with a person's name on it. You select what you read by headlines. So it is with ads. You must always measure what effect a change in headline has on your results.
- Don't rely on your own judgement and experience in advertising – especially when it comes to headlines. Test everything you do with your specific audience. Your audience is likely to see the headline differently so, as with new products, prices and guarantees, test your headline with the target audience.

### **Writing effective letters and sales copy**

Once you have constructed a compelling headline, you must structure the copy, or the body of your letter or ad. This is where you write a story describing your business in the way a customer will want to experience it.

So what is it you are trying to say? If it is your Yellow™ ad, you need to let the client know precisely why you are better than your competition. Tell them all the things you do that your competitors don't.

Tell them about your extra service, your guarantee, and your friendly staff. Be sure the copy clearly communicates how and why your company is better for them. Always be specific and honest (keeping in mind your legal obligations). For example, don't say: 'We serve you better than anyone else.' That's not specific. You should say: 'We will provide an obligation-free quote', 'We will respond to your request within 24 hours' or 'We will deliver your goods within five working days or delivery is free.'

You should write your ad the way you speak. Don't make it cumbersome and wordy. Just write it like you say it. If it sounds too 'sales-like' it is less likely to appeal. You want to be clear, precise and customer friendly.

Use testimonials in your sales copy. This is a simple but powerful tool that can dramatically increase your response rate. Ask your current satisfied customers what they think about your product or service. Ask them to explain what their need was and how it has been met. For example, they might say: "Before I found Jane I had no idea about marketing my business. I ran ads but just wasn't getting the response I thought I would. Jane showed me how to implement just a couple of simple changes, and my profits have tripled in two months – that's an extra \$10,000! I'm really looking forward to using more of her strategies."

Provide an 1800 or 1300 number or a recorded message service. Some customers may be more likely to contact you if you provide a free mechanism for them to do so. Some customers prefer not to deal with anyone directly and may be more open to leaving their details on a recorded message.

Include coupons in your sales copy. A coupon customers can tear off or cut out and put in their pocket or purse can act as a prompt. Instead of a customer reading an ad and forgetting it as soon as they move on to the next, the coupon can act as a reminder to purchase.

Make a timed offer. This is important and should be considered as part of all your letters and ads. Just like the coupon it gives a 'call to action' but a deadline can be effective because, generally, people don't like to miss

out. A deadline can be a very effective tool for increasing an ad's response rate, and it can also help you keep a control of budget. It may be difficult to plan your budget if you are still providing a discount from an ad you ran two years earlier.

Make it a limited supply. Again it forces the reader to 'act now.' This works in the same way as the timed offer because there is a chance you will miss out if you don't do something about it right away. And this is another way of managing the financial impacts of your campaign. Just make sure there is enough supply to satisfy reasonable demand.

Use trial offers. This can be a very powerful tool. We don't like to feel at risk, particularly when buying something for the first time. For low-cost products such as food, beverages and high-repeat sale items, a free sample can be very encouraging. For larger items, a free trial or an inspection period might be preferred.

## Slogans

A slogan is your Unique Buying Reason (UBR) in action. Slogans should be an extension of your UBR and not conflict with it. Slogans can also change over time as a business develops. Below are some guidelines to assist in the development of a slogan for your business.

1. Decide on your objective. Is it to:
  - Build company awareness?
  - Create customer loyalty?
  - Create controversy?
  - Establish credibility?
  - Re-position the business?
2. Develop a list of key words and phrases aligned to your objective. For example, if you were looking to develop a slogan around credibility and experience, you may choose words and phrases like:
  - 30 years in business
  - Strong, stable management
  - Reputation
  - Proven
  - Track record
  - Prestige.

3. Consider where the slogan will be used. This can help determine how long it should be, whether it needs a logo to accompany it, choices of colour and even style of writing. If you are going to use it across different mediums, make sure it works well (some things that work on TV, don't translate on radio). Consider some of the following mediums:

- Letterhead
- Website
- Business cards
- Telephone messages
- Retail packaging
- Order forms
- Advertising.

4. Be creative – remember, you need to stand out.
5. Seek legal advice to ensure your brand is protected and you are in fact able to use it. You may need to register an internet domain name of your slogan to protect it online, for example.
6. Test your slogan before final implementation. Remember your customer may have a different perspective to you as the business owner. Make sure you test it with a sample group.

Some examples of slogans are listed below to inspire you:

- We try harder – Avis
- Just do it – Nike
- This Buds for you – Budweiser
- When it absolutely, positively, has to be there – FedEx
- It's the real thing – Coca Cola
- Zoom, zoom, zoom – Mazda
- The spirit of Australia – Qantas.

## Testing techniques

Testing alternative headlines, format and copy can keep your advertising fresh, while testing alternative media channels can help you identify the best method of reaching your audience. Try testing different:

- Ways of saying the same thing
- Publications, radio time slots or channels
- Mailing lists
- Price points
- Copy and headlines
- Direct-mail pieces
- Guarantees and offers.

If you are testing your advertising and have more than one advertisement running at the same time, it is vital you are able to identify where a lead originates. You can do this in different ways, including:

- Using a coded coupon to help identify which ad it came from
- Asking the customer where they heard/saw your ad
- Using different contact points for each ad. You can count the number of responses generated by each ad. 1800 and 1300 phone numbers can work well in these situations. SMS responses can also be monitored in the same way as email responses.

You should keep a clear record of all results. Even if you don't use them now, you may find them useful next time you are planning an advertising campaign.

Test as many things as possible in the smallest possible arena before you risk a big part of your advertising budget on one expensive marketing approach to a large audience. Why guess what the customer will like, or what price they are willing to pay, when the customer could be willing and even eager to tell you the answer?

The same approach for testing applies to all forms of advertising. Why run five 60-second TV commercials each day saying something only one way, when another presentation of the same message might attract more customers? If TV is part of your advertising approach, test whether showing your product or service in use makes a difference. Your 60-second ad at a given time is going to cost the same whether it is seen by 10 customers or 110 customers, so is it not worth your while to test it?

If you engage an advertising agency, you should ensure they understand your objectives loud and clear. Advertising that sells – that's the creative

attitude business owners want, and if you are using an agency it is the attitude you should demand. In reality, most small business owners will not be using an advertising agency. However, you may need the services of a graphic design agency and a professional copywriter from time to time. Following are some ideas on how best to work with a design business or copywriter.

### When to use a graphic designer

Any business that wants to differentiate itself in a highly competitive market, should consider employing the skills of an experienced designer. Consider this: you would not choose to fix your own teeth, you would see a dentist. Likewise, unless you are an expert, a business has a far greater chance of visual success and branding if they engage a designer, than trying to do this for themselves.

One of the main benefits is a designer is a trained creative professional – providing visual designs to suit all kinds of commercial operations. For a small business, a graphic designer can provide an objective opinion. They should be able to analyse the visual needs of the business and provide a holistic solution. An experienced design company should provide a solution to suit a start-up operation – both in scope of the project and budget – and one capable of flexibility and evolution over a period of time.

The design should allow enough flexibility for a very small, single person entity to evolve into a multi national organisation if the case should be. A small business' need for visual representation can depend on who their target market is. A commercial printing supplier will need something very different to a fashion retailer. The fashion retailer will be more likely to rely on a visual, well-represented, branded environment for its customers than the printing supplier who may not service customers on its premises. This may start out as a simple logo, stationery requirements and a basic website, and grow over time to have added elements (signage, brochures, direct mail, etc). A professional designer should have the skills to take your project from start to finish. They should be able to deliver artwork ready for printing, or ready for use in multimedia applications, including a website.

## What makes a good brief?

When engaging a third party such as an advertising agency, graphic designer or copywriter, you should write a brief, or an outline of your expectations. A good brief is often a result of good preparation. Ask yourself:

- What do I need?
- What is my business plan and budget?
- What are my business goals?
- Who is my target market?
- What are my expectations?
- What is my timeline?
- How will I measure the results?
- Is my business serious? Quirky? Mass market? Niche?
- Do I deal with corporate clients, or do I have one-off customers with no particular loyalty?
- Do I need to look slick? Rough? Intelligent? Handcrafted or elegant?
- Do I have direct competitors to differentiate myself from?

You may provide a very structured brief following a standardised template, or you may prefer a verbal discussion, with the designer taking notes and asking questions. Every graphic designer will have a different slant on what is a 'good' brief. The basics, though, should include concise clear instructions, allowance for input and creativity from the designer, manageable timelines and budget, and a client willing to listen and work in a consultative manner. Designers don't have sole rights on having creative thoughts – often the best work results from a client–designer relationship which encourages discussion and input from both sides.

## The elements of good design

Every graphic designer is likely to have a different opinion on this, just as every person has an individual idea of what is a 'good' colour, or what is a 'good' car to buy – it is a very subjective topic. However, there are some fundamental design principles which can be used to test a 'good' design:

## Visual appeal

The design should be clear regardless of the complexity of the business. It may be colourful and chaotic, yet should still have an underlying sense of clarity and flow. It may have a witty or unique idea, or be confronting and anxious in some manner, but should make sense to the customer.

## Legibility

Is your business appealing to the 15–25 age group where the funkier, edgier graphics, work best? Or is your business appealing to a broad market between the ages of 20–60+ where you don't want to alienate anyone? What level of visual literacy does your audience have? The ability to have your message read, either in a literal sense or a non-verbal sense, is the prime motivation for design in the first place, so make sure it is legible.

## Typography

A skilled designer deals with the placement of text, choice of font, scaling, proportion, readability and hierarchy of information. There is a myriad of typefaces available today. Some businesses will require a font with flexibility, one they can use for many years without becoming tired. Some will use a contemporary, funky font and update it within a few years. One of the important points to consider is whether you will need a PC version of the font. Designers for the most part use Postscript fonts on Apple Macintosh computers. It is possible to buy a TrueType version of most Postscript fonts, and this is an item you should consider budgeting for so you can maintain consistency in the look and feel of all correspondence you produce.

## Colour schemes

Clinical research has demonstrated the psychological impact of colour. Getting it right for the client and the design is a crucial part. Try not to impose your own subjective opinions – while it is important you like your brand and business look, it is more important your customers like it. If you are paying a graphic designer, give them an opportunity to show you

what works and why before you discount a particular shade. Sometimes budget restrictions can impact your options. An experienced designer should sort through this and come up with the right solution.

### Logo design

It is important to ensure your standard logo design works in a variety of forms, whether a very small, black and white (mono) representation on an envelope or a full colour representation on the side of a building. A logo that's great in full colour, but does not work in a simple one colour version, is a logo of limited usage.

### Functionality

This applies particularly to 3D items such as packaging, and also to websites. Does the finished design suit the brief and application it is intended for? Can you navigate the website in a logical manner?

### Working with a design agency

Allocating a budget can be a difficult task. Not all design studios will charge the same amount. There are many levels of approach a studio can take to answer the same brief for the same client. So, how do you work out a formula? Some businesses will meet with three design studios and go through a folio presentation, assessment of needs, quotation submission, and make a decision based on the bottom line. Other businesses will ask for word-of-mouth recommendations from their colleagues, and will then engage a design studio based on their reputation. They may also ask for guidance from other businesses about what they paid for their identity, collateral, and so on, and base their budget on this. Most design studios will determine how long they think a project will take (based on the brief provided) and will apply an hourly rate. They might also add some fees to cover additional items such as materials, printing, and project management.

When allocating a budget, try to be realistic with your expectations. It is better to be up front, especially as a start-up business, and explain to the design studio you only have a certain amount to spend, and to ask them what they can do for that amount. You can then add to it over time, as the business can afford to spend more.

Here is an example of what to include in a brief to a design agency:

Business name:		Date today:	
Campaign name:		Review date:	
Client contact:		Launch date:	
Budget:		Contact number:	
Product/service/brand name			
What is the objective?			
Ideal target market			
What do they think about us now?			
What do we want them to think about us?			
How will we do this?			
By saying what?			
What allows us to say this? Research etc			
Preferred media			
Regulatory issues			
Brand guidelines			