

IMAGE IS EVERYTHING: TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MARKETING

BY FRANK GÓMEZ

Do you ever wonder how an ad you like was developed, or why it resonated with you? In most instances, it was developed:

- To grab your attention
- To connect with you emotionally
- To be memorable
- To be image consistent

Although we usually associate such advertising with mega-corporations, the same techniques can be applied to marketing for medium-size and small businesses and even to non-profit organizations. Your target audiences must be clear about what your business or non-profit does and what value it holds for them. So your design, the images you use, your message and where you advertise should be consistent with the goals in your marketing strategy.

Marketing Strategy

The overall goals for your advertising are: 1) to attract donations; 2) to grow your membership; and 3) to sell your product or service. If you are paying attention, you've probably heard this many times: the goal of every marketing piece should be to reach people on an emotional level (share of heart, share of mind). Decisions about contributing to a cause or buying something are based on emotion. Intelligent use of a variety of tools: well-chosen design; images; fonts; and powerful language – can make your marketing much more effective. More importantly, you will successfully target your most likely clients, members or donors.

Knowing Your Target Audience

A smart strategy should begin with some simple but fundamental questions about your audience, your customer or your donor. So it is important to be certain that you know and understand the people you are trying to reach. Ask yourself these questions:

Who are you trying to reach?

What do they read?

Where do they hang out?

What influences them most (media, peers, Internet, social networking, print media)

What are their interests?

Use Color to evoke emotion

Your logo should incorporate colors that complement your message or the intended feeling your organization needs to evoke. Color matters. Be sure your graphic designer is including the psychological impact of color in his or her considerations for your marketing materials.

Again, consistency is key. Your audiences should be able to recognize your organization instantly.

Choose Fonts Carefully

Using the right fonts in your messaging can be very powerful. Think about what you want to convey: elegance, happiness, professionalism? A high tech firm needs a font that looks interesting and modern and that probably has very clean edges. Sometimes the logo inspires the font. If the logo has rounded corners, then a font with rounded features and consistent with the logo will lead to a more cohesive overall look. Sometimes a font that contrasts with the logo is beneficial. It depends on the “feeling” you want to project.

Be wary of being “font crazy.” Use no more than 2 or 3 different fonts in any ad. Here again, consistency is key: use the same fonts on your website as in your print marketing. Your audience should recognize you readily – like the Nike swoosh. There is one important exception, however. Use common “web safe” fonts for the body of your website because your readers’ web browser will substitute an unusual font with one that is on their computer, eliminating any visual effect you wanted to have.

Write and Speak with Powerful Language

You need to make a powerful statement first with your tag line. The tagline connects with people quickly and easily to elicit an initial response. Some taglines make one wonder what the message is all about. Yours should convey who you are and what you do. Paying attention to how your words can be interpreted in any marketing is critical. When talking about benefits of donating to your organization use a presumptive message. This example is the opposite and leaves the donor with options: “If you donate...” Tweak your message so that the words imply that they are going to donate or hire you. “Your donation will [have this impact]...” Your use of language can make a dramatic difference in the result you get from any communication.

Advertise Strategically

Advertising can be very expensive. Take care not to advertise where it doesn’t pay off. Think about what medium the donor or client in your target market views, reads, or listens to most. That is where you should spend your money.

In print advertising, unless you are paying for a full-page ad, ask for your ad to be placed in the upper left or lower right hand corner of a two-page spread. Most production managers won’t promise anything, but sometimes they will accommodate you simply because you asked. Others will charge extra for special placement. If the charge is minimal, pay it! It is not worth the risk of having your ad buried in the fold.

Unless you are buying a full-page ad, select the odd sizes or shapes instead of a half or quarter page. Readers get used to those half and quarter page “boxes” and (their eyes) skip right over them. The sizes that catch people’s eyes are usually 1/3 or 2/3 of a page. Column ads are very

effective too, but make sure the publication is placing your ad in the middle or outer edge of the page and not in the fold.

Direct mail is especially effective if you are offering something for a discount. Use your own mailing list or pay for demographic data so that you are assured of reaching the most likely donors or buyers of your product.

Unless you already know the answers: Ask every donor or client how they found out about you. Examples:

- What was it about the ad that caught your attention?
- Did you see other ads for the same type of organization?
- Why did you choose to donate to our organization instead of to another?
- Where did you see the ad?
- What other publications do you read?
- Did you see our ad in _____ too?

What about Interviews and Articles?

Excellent! Interviews about your non-profit or business are an excellent tool – especially for a new organization. You can promote your own “free advertising” by asking for an interview; but make sure you know the vehicle well and the style of the interviewer. Do some research first. And take care to promote the interview in a publication or electronic medium with a wide audience, or that is very clearly directed at your target audience. If it is on radio, make sure the interview is going to be on a station that caters to your target market. Talk about benefits, what your organization accomplished last year, or last month. Why is it important? What difference do you make? What would happen if your organization didn’t exist?

Get a Second Opinion

Advertisers and their agencies often conduct brainstorming sessions to develop concepts for advertising. When ads are developed, they use focus groups to test their messages. A focus group reveals a great deal about how targeted audiences will respond to an ad. Feedback can help refine the message, assure maximum impact and make it do what it is supposed to do – connect with the audience and elicit the desired response.

Most nonprofits and many small businesses, however, may not be able to afford an ad agency or focus groups. No matter. Each organization has its own network of members and friends, and can even recruit persons willing to lend an opinion for a good cause. Use staff and members to generate a few basic concepts for the key elements of your marketing piece; and then ask a few people what they think is best and how it makes them feel. Feedback about how your messages will be received gives you insight into its probable emotional impact. The best choices will stand out and will guide your decisions on content and messaging.

The Top Three Low-cost/No-cost Marketing Tools

The three most effective marketing tools of this type are:

- Spending time with people you already know (inviting them to an event, buying them lunch or coffee to stay connected, or asking to meet in person to discuss something of interest to them)
- Building a network of people you don't know
- Public speaking

What do these three things have in common?

- They are Face-to Face
- They are all opportunities to give your business card, or brochure to people you meet.

The big buzz right now is about technology and ways to communicate electronically. All of those things pale in comparison to real relationships. Your business or nonprofit may hold interest for civic groups, a chamber of commerce, or other organizations. Be sure to keep some face-to-face time in your marketing tool bag.

Business cards

Business cards are the most effective, most affordable, printed marketing tool for several reasons:

- 1) They can be carried everywhere;
- 2) They can be attached to a letter, card or other printed matter;
- 3) If properly designed, they complement your logo and website and convey vital messages instantly (and may even invite questions);
- 4) They are directly from you or from someone recommending you.

Strategic Marketing Partners

As a non-profit you can find other non-profits with a similar target market. You might want to go as far as working with your competition on a goal. Team up and work on your cause together. Find out how you can help each other and do it! Both parties must commit so both benefit and have a positive experience.

Common Courtesy

Treat others as you want to be treated. Smile when you meet people, be sincere. Don't hound anyone. The cream always rises to the top. Remember: image is everything.

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