



Business guide

Advertising that works

Advertising should be viewed as an investment that should generate a return, rather than a fixed cost. Many businesses spend money on the same kind of advertising each month without knowing what is working and what isn't.

Effective advertising builds profile, generates new business, and retains your existing customers. Poorly thought out advertising can create miscommunication and even make you look less credible or trustworthy.

A considerable proportion of business advertising tries to include everyone rather than an established target market. Targeting a specific market doesn't mean you will lose your existing customers, or discourage new customers who don't fit your target. Target marketing is about using the resources you have to attract the type of person who is most likely to be receptive to your products and services.

Deciding on a strategy

Advertising is huge industry with multiple mediums for your message to be heard, or lost in translation. It might sound like a no brainer but before you start planning your advertising, you need to think about what you are trying to achieve from your investment. It's likely that your ultimate objective is to build sales but there are other things to think about, such as increasing market presence and building your brand.

Advertising can be used to:

- Establish a reputation as the market leader or industry expert – allowing you to win long-term contracts or even increase prices.
- Build brand awareness for a product to make it easier to sell and raise the profile of your other products.
- Change customer perceptions of your products and services to boost sales.
- Detail a specific, one-off message to your market by informing potential customers of a special offer or a particular component of your product.
- Address your existing customers to increase your brand awareness – meaning they think of your business first when they are considering a product or service.

Identifying your target market

Before any advertising is written, you need to take the time to define your target market (if you haven't already). Knowing who you are trying to target will help you customize your marketing efforts to suit those people.

You should already have some idea of who is interested in your products or services, but the easiest way of clearly defining your target market is to create an ideal customer profile.

How to create a customer profile:



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1. Try and create an ideal demographic for your target market. Think about the age, gender, marital status and income of the person most likely to buy your product or use your services. If you are unsure, think about your biggest customers – is there anything they have in common, such as age or gender?
2. Think about the geographical reach of your business – most product and service-based businesses have a limited market area. Think about your regular customers or clients – do they live close by or travel to reach you? Once you know your market area, you could research existing data or conduct some market research to find out the average age, income and family status of people in your area.
3. If the majority of your business is online, look at your major competitor – are males or females interacting with their social media or on online forums, for example? Do they have testimonials on their website you can use to find out their target market?
4. Be careful not to make your target market too specific, as you may exclude a large portion of potential customers. For example, rather than targeting couples aged up to 30 years who own their first home, it might be better to target couples aged up to 40 years who are currently renting but are interested in purchasing a property.

You can learn a lot about your target market by looking at your competition – pay attention to where they advertise, how they present their advertising and the kind of tone they use in their written material. Subscribing to competitor newsletters or regularly checking their websites is a good way of keeping up-to-date from a distance.

Types of advertising

Knowing what type of advertising will appeal the most to your target market is the key to producing advertising that works.

Here are the most common types of advertising you can use to promote your business.

- **Print advertising.** Print advertising traditionally covers newspapers, magazines, brochures, fliers and any other printed media. Print advertising can be expensive, such as a feature page in a newspaper or a glossy magazine. More inexpensive options include community papers, classifieds, or delivered printed fliers.
- **Internet advertising.** Internet advertising includes online services such as YouTube, Facebook, Google+ and Twitter but also includes banner ads and embedded video content. Internet advertising offers a range of options for different budgets, from pay-per-click services such as Google AdWords to home page coverage on a popular website.
- **Outdoor or out-of-home advertising.** Outdoor advertising covers a range of billboards, signs or even event sponsorship. Other popular types of outdoor advertising include motor vehicles, such as advertisements on buses or your personal car. Some outdoor advertising such as billboards will require a permit, and most signs are subject to local laws and regulations that determine where they can be located.

- **Broadcast advertising.** Broadcast advertising traditionally includes television and radio, but can also cover some Internet mediums such as YouTube, Vimeo, or even podcasts.

Appealing to your market

Now that you have identified your target market, the next step is to decide which forms of advertising will give you the best return for your investment.

This decision will be based on the behaviours of your target market, such as:

- Personality
- Values
- Interests or hobbies
- Lifestyles.

Think about how your product or service fits your target market's lifestyle – will they have enough time to use your product, or are they too busy? Also think about what features of your product or service will be most appealing to them, such as quality, price and after-sales support.

You should now have a good idea which features of your products or services you should pay the most attention to in your advertising material.

If you are a city retailer selling skateboards, and your target market is primarily males aged between 15 and 24 years, there would be little benefit from placing an advert in the local community newspaper. Generally, you would get a better return putting your resources into a Facebook advert or an advert in an extreme sports magazine. If you own a fashion store that primarily attracts females aged between 50 and 70 years, you would generally get a better return on a feature page in a local newspaper than from embarking on a digital media campaign.

Future-proofing your advertising

To get the most out of your investment, make sure you:

- Listen to any customer feedback about your advertising.
- Are prepared to amend your advertising efforts if they aren't working.
- Continue to observe your competitors advertising efforts and pick up on any new trends or tools you can use.
- Ask another business owner or professional for advice if you are in doubt about advertising material content, design or tone.
- Are aware of laws or regulations about where you can advertise and the content of your messages.
- Feed your advertising results back into your marketing or business plan.