

positive
media
m a r k e t i n g

A man in a dark suit and tie is shown from the chest up, holding a white sign with black text. He has his eyes closed and a serene expression. The sign is held in his right hand and is tilted upwards. The background is plain white.

101 Top Tips
and techniques
to improve
your advertising

Special Report

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Part 1: Planning and budgeting

As with all business functions, it is important to plan and budget for your advertising and promotions. Evaluating how much you want to spend, and the likely impact of your promotional activity is not an easy task, and is open to so many variables, that it can seem impossible to determine with any accuracy. However, setting some clear objectives for your promotions and attempting to ensure your planning works towards those objectives is one of the most vital tasks any business undertakes.

1. Set a clear and realistic advertising objective

You need to have a clear idea of what you are trying to achieve – it may be more sales, increased awareness of your company, lead generation, higher brand recognition than your competitors, or many other options. Be clear what business objective you are trying to achieve with your advertising and remember to concentrate your strategy on achieving your one specific objective.

2. Integrate all your advertising and promotions

Advertising in isolation will work. Advertising integrated into your communications and business strategy will work much, much harder. Look at other options, such as PR, sales conferences, exhibitions, and make sure your advertising takes the most advantage possible from them. Make sure you have a consistent message, consistent branding, and integrated timing. And make sure your business processes match as well – if you are generating calls, be certain your call centre is ready, if you are generating sales, ensure stocks are up to the necessary levels.

3. Give yourself time and give your advertising time

Advertising takes time. Time to plan, to develop, to write and design, to carry out testing, and time to be placed in the media. It also takes time to have an impact. Often an advert needs a high level of repetition over time to have its full impact. It is also worth remembering that good advertising has impact long after the campaign has finished. Give yourself time to develop and run your campaigns, especially if they have a seasonal factor, and allow time for them to have their impact on your customers.

4. Get to know your audience

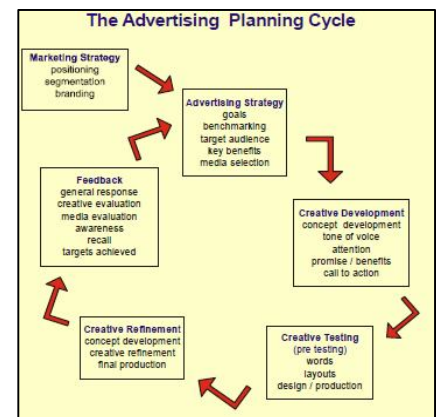
The importance of knowing your audience cannot be stressed too highly. You are advertising to them and you must know certain things to make your advertising have any impact: Who they are (demographics, lifestyles, common denominators); why they will want your product; who do they see as your competition; where you can reach them (which media); what messages/benefits will appeal to them.

5. Don't forget your other audiences

Advertising often has a wider impact than reaching end consumers. Other objectives can be achieved and other audiences reached. Retailers can be encouraged to take stocks, if they know advertising is planned. Family members and other people can have a strong influence on purchase decisions – just think of parents and the 'pesterpower' of small children. And don't forget the impact your advertising will have on your competition.

6. Plan your media

When you know who you are trying to reach you need to plan how to get to them. Review your demographic/lifestyle data to find out how best to reach them. What do they read? Where do they go? Do they listen to particular radio stations, or watch look to the obvious media, remember to be creative and look at options such as ambient media and new media such as sms. A little creativity in your media planning can pay dividends.



7. Review your brand

You want them to remember you – so make sure you are memorable. Test whether people are aware of your brand, and what they perceive it as. This can often be a shock, not necessarily bad, but they may see you differently to the way you expect. Your advertising will need to reflect their perception and not yours. Make sure your brand is what you think it is, and make sure your advertising reinforces what you want it to be.

8. Gather your proof

Gather everything you can about your brand/product/business. Specifics convince, generalities don't. For example, everyone claims "quality, excellence, innovation, value" to the point that they mean nothing. Review all your evidence to back up your key points – look at testimonials, performance figures, previous sales. Look for the hard facts and figures that prove your point.

9. Benchmark before you start

What is your advertising intended to achieve? How will you know if it is effective? Benchmark before starting and measure the factors that are important to you – current awareness, current sales levels, etc. Test regularly during your campaign to see what impact your advertising is having. It is often possible to change aspects of the campaign as you go along, tweaking things until you find the optimum return on your investment.

10. Set a realistic budget

Once you know what you want to achieve, which media are best for you, and your timing, then you can start to look at budgets. Many firms set an annual budget, often a percentage of last year's income, and plan their advertising from there. While this may be a convenient way of managing resources, it will never be as effective as planning your advertising and its impact on future income, and then setting an appropriate budget to achieve your objectives. Talk to your agencies and your media companies to discuss the best ways to reach your audience and use this to determine how much budget you are going to need.

Part 2: Knowing your target audience

Before embarking on any advertising it is important to know your target audience. Without some basic knowledge about who you are trying to talk to, what messages they are interested in, and what media they are exposed to, it is impossible to advertise effectively. Advertising is an art, but it is also a science, so make sure you analyse your target market before you start trying to communicate with them.

11. Get to know your customer profile

It may seem obvious, but working out who your target audience is can be more beneficial than anything else. However, there are many ways to define your target – location, age, spending habits, hobbies, income levels, life stage, occupation. And remember, there may be others to think about, such as people buying your product as a present for others.

12. Do your research

Research your market. This can be a widely varied process from full scale market research to simple surveys, focus groups, or reading market reports. Remember to have clear goals for your research – identify what you need to find out about your audience before you start on any research. Use agencies if you can. Their experience and expertise can save you a lot of time and help to ensure your research is accurate.

13. Use all your sources of information

As well as carrying out surveys and employing agencies, there are many other ways to find out about your target audience. Local libraries carry a whole wealth of information, and can get copies of research reports on demand. Your contacts in the trade and your retailers can often provide information on buying habits, what people are asking before deciding on a purchase, etc.. The internet is a valuable source of market information when used carefully, and can provide lots of socio-demographic data.

14. Determine what your customers have in common

Once you have defined your target audience, look for other common factors – do they shop in the same stores, do they all drive BMWs, are they keen cinema goers? These insights can often give a clue to alternative ways to approach your audience, or to factors that help them make a buying decision.

15. Find out why people buy your brand.

Find out why people buy your brand. What motivates them. It's not always the obvious and logical answer and purchases are based on a variety of stimuli – prestige, convenience, price, packaging, familiarity. Some audiences are susceptible to special offers, others are not, so know which your type are. Research what they buy, ask them how they decide.

16. Investigate your competitor brands

Look at your market and find out which competitors are popular with your target market – and why. Compare levels of awareness with your own brand and what your audience think of your competitors' promotions, as well as their product. And don't forget to look at alternative options – often you are competing with other choices. If you are selling cars, you need to know attitudes to other car brands, but also to other options like motorbikes, public transport etc.



17. Decide which media will work best for you

Now you know who they are and what they have in common, you need to know which media get their attention. Investigate and test ways of communicating with your audience. Is there an appropriate specialist magazine, or specific poster sites near to your points of sales? Which radio stations and shows do they listen to? And look for other opportunities such as ambient media and sponsorship.

18. Determine which benefits are important

Benefits make sales, not features. Investigate and test what the important benefits are for your target audience. What do they want your brand to do for them? And test ways to impart those benefits in your advertising and brands.

19. Tone of voice

Different audiences have different ways of talking. Imagine a group of accountants talking, or bikers, or teenage skateboarders. They all have their own language and nuances. Make sure you know the tone of voice for your audience and reflect it in your advertising copy.

20. Keep checking

As with all research, keeping in touch with your audience is a continuous process. Keep checking from time to time about all the factors listed above. Competition changes, media evolve, and factors affecting purchase decisions alter with remarkable speed, so keep checking.

Part 3: How to select the right media

Media selection and buying is a vital component of any campaign and is as important as copy writing or good creative work. Your ad is brilliant, eye-catching and elicits immediate response, but it will only work if it's in the right place at the right time for you audience to see it.

21. Know what you want to achieve

Different media achieve different things. Start with being very clear about what you are trying to achieve with your campaign – Is it brand awareness? Or competitor comparison? Or direct response? Or lead generation? And choose media best suited to supporting your campaign aims.

22. Find the right media for your target market

They have things in common and that includes media. What do they pay attention to? Is it specialist magazines, particular radio shows, local papers? Do they go to the cinema, or theatre, or particular shopping centres, or follow particular commuter routes where you can use poster advertising?

23. Match the message to the media

“Eat beans” is a simple message that fits on an Adshell poster with ease. ‘Fifteen reasons to choose your widgets instead of your competitors’ isn’t. Some brands and messages lend themselves to movement and sound and so work best with broadcast advertising. Some industrial and direct sales messages are complicated and can only be presented in written format to give people the time to digest and respond. Review your message and choose the best media format.

24. Calculate like for like

Achieving value for money can be difficult. It is possible to continuously pour money into advertising and achieve results, but selecting the right media means you can achieve far more for your money. Review the ratecards for the media you are interested in and pay careful attention to readership figures and cost per thousand readers. This will give you an idea of where the best returns can be found.

25. Remember there's more to it than money

However, the value of advertising is dependent on much more than simple cost per thousand. The right media delivers the right audience. It also makes a statement about your brand and who it is associated with. Imagine placing your advert in The Guardian newspaper or in the Sunday Sport. Not only will you attract different target audiences, but you will be saying something about your brand values.



Unusual media, such as washroom advertising can make a creative difference to a campaign

26. Be creative in your media buying

It is easy to get obsessed with the creative work for an advert – the copy writing, design, images, voice-over. But don't forget to be creative with your media as well. Use of unusual or unexpected media can have a huge impact on a campaign. Don't ignore the obvious – it's obvious because it is known to work already, but do look for new and different media. SMS advertising, washroom posters, petrol pump handles, and on-line advertising can have an impact much greater than just another ad in the local paper.

27. Integrate all your promotions

Never plan media in isolation. Always look at how advertising in one media can support advertising in another. For example, use radio advertising to direct people to look at the ad in this weeks free paper, or go to a particular website for more information. The same advert in different media will often be seen by the same people and the very fact it is in different media will increase it's impact. Select media as a package to achieve maximum impact and make certain your media plan includes timing to ensure adverts complement each other.



28. Always test your advertising

If it is hard to choose between two different media, try them both, but make sure you monitor results. In printed media it is often a good idea to use a coded voucher, or reply slip to get an immediate feel for response levels for different media. If you are generating leads, make sure you test where they came from – the simple question "where did you hear about us" can tell you all you need to know about which adverts are being effective. Keep testing even when you are not advertising and you can see the benefit of advertising and how long it takes for that benefit to fade and be built up again.

29. Use the experts

Media owners want to sell you their space – that's their living. But they will tell you a lot of information if you ask – ratecards, distribution, readership profiles. Gather information about your target media and check who else is advertising. Use marketing and advertising agencies where you can. They can get this information, and use their experience to evaluate it and suggest media buying plans for your campaign.

30. Allow time for your advertising to be effective

This is surprisingly hard. When you run an advert, run it again and again and again. It often takes four times for people to even notice an advert. Familiarity helps to develop awareness and trust in brands. Make sure your media plan allows for repeat viewing of your ad. Momentum can build slowly at first and the temptation is to change the ad or the media. Don't. Hold your nerve and give your advertising the time it needs to be effective.

Part 4: Basics of copy writing

Copy writing is a skilled art form, but there are rules that make it work. Keep it short. Keep it to the point. Keep it flowing. Keep to the rules of grammar. Keep it enthusiastic. Follow these rules and you have a chance of getting your message across to people. Break them and no one will read to the end of your ad, let alone act on it.

31. Know what you want to say

Then you can think about how to say it. Gather your evidence, facts, details, prices, testimonials and make sure you know what you are trying to say. Always concentrate on benefits – what it will do for your customer, why they should want it.

32. Remember your audience

Remember who your advert is aimed at. Doctors speak a different language to 14 year old skateboarders. Write your copy in their style, not yours. But always be careful not to create a parody of the style you are looking for. We have all seen or heard those ads that start 'hey kids...' and go on to use slang that went out of fashion ten years earlier. Always test your copy on a small sample of your target audience before unleashing it on the world at large.

33. Concentrate on the benefits

Be careful to focus on the benefits your brand has to offer. Not the technical detail. Not the facts. Just the benefits. ABS is a complicated, brilliant bit of engineering that took years of development. I don't care. ABS will help me avoid an accident. That I care about. The benefits can be much more varied than is at first obvious. If your product has a fashion or prestige value, then let your copy allude to that. Remember your brand values and how they benefit your customers.

34. Tell it to them in your opening paragraph

Your opening paragraph has to say what you are selling in the simplest and most direct terms you can. Don't build up to an interesting ending – they won't get there! "25 years ago a man had a vision to produce a better widget. He spent years in research and then bought a factory..." by the time you tell them what you are trying to sell them, they will have gone. Page-turners are for novelists, not ad-men. Tell them up front in the first para and then elaborate later.

35. Maintain a logical flow

Use AIDA – attention, interest, desire and action. These are the steps a successful ad must take its reader through. There is always so much to say. The first rule is say as little of it as possible. Give people ten benefits and they will forget all of them. Give them three and they might remember them. Once you have culled what you want to say, then make your copy flow logically from point to point. Use link words and phrases like "because... and of course... not only..." and make your copy flow. That way people find themselves at your call to action before they know it!

36. Stick to the rules – most of the time

Language and grammar have rules. All rules are made to be broken and stretched, such as 'never begin a sentence with but'. But the rules of grammar make language work at its best. They make it easier to read. Good spelling and grammar usually go unnoticed, but if they are poor they make your ad look shoddy and carelessly put together. If your ad is shoddy, then what image does that create for your brand? And always double and triple check your details – make sure the phone number, address and website details are correct, the dates for the sale are this years and not last years.

37. Finish with a flourish

Your copy should always be upbeat and positive. Remember you are trying to sell something – if you don't sound enthusiastic why should your audience be interested in your product? The closing paragraph is almost as important as the opening one. Use it to summarise what you have said. Make sure it reads like an ending and not like you ran out of great things to say about your brand. Make sure it includes your call to action.

38. Always have a 'Call to Action'

Very few of us can afford to do advertising that is purely based on awareness of our brands. Even if it can be done, then it is still a wasted opportunity. Always, always, always include a call to action. Tell them what you want them to do now they have read your advert – phone this number, visit this shop, send this coupon, visit this website, buy brand X from their local bookstore – always tell them what to do next.

39. Cut it out

You need to tell people the benefits of your brands and products, you need to let them know where to get them, you need to give them the call to action, you need to get their attention. But you also need to keep them interested enough to read through your ad. Make each word count. No frills or fluff. Say what you need to say in the shortest and most effective way you can.

40. Have a cup of tea

English is a fantastic language – just think how many meanings there are for the word fantastic just then, it could be relating to fantasy, it could be positive, it could be negative. Almost anything you write can have more than one meaning, and it is the reader who will decide what it means to them when they read it, not you when you have written it. When you have finished your copy, check it. Read it out loud. Go away and make a cup of tea and come back and read it out loud again. Does it make sense, does it really mean what you wanted it to mean? Then get someone else to read it out loud to you. Did they read it how it sounded in your head, with the same meaning and intonation?



Part 5: Attention Grabbers

It has been estimated that the average adult in the UK is subjected to over 2,000 advertising stimuli every day. It seems a lot but think about it. Direct mail in the post, branding on your cornflakes box, product placement in TV shows, logo on your tshirt, and that's before we even think about traditional advertising in newspapers, on radio and TV, posters on buses and bus shelters, and all those point of sale promotions in the shops. AIDA starts with attention. Your ad needs to have impact to stand out from the crowd and reach your target market.

41. Keep your advertising relevant

Every day we ignore hundreds of adverts and pay attention to a small proportion. We choose to look at what is relevant to us, our needs, our desires. Focus on the key benefit to your target market and they will pay attention. Make it clear what you are offering up front and the right people will notice.

42. Use the KISS principle

Keep It Short and Simple. Less is more when trying to attract attention. A powerful image or just two or three of the right words is all it takes. Don't try and explain everything in the headline. Use your opening paragraph to explain your offer, and use the rest of your body copy to elaborate and provide the call to action. Use your headline to get them to stop and to read your opening paragraph.

43. Use pictures and images

A picture tells a thousand words. It can attract the eye in the first place, but it can also set the tone for the ad. Sometimes, particularly with a poster campaign, a picture says so much that there is no need for body copy. Usually however, it is there to attract the reader's attention, so make sure it does. Make it a powerful image, not a dull pack shot. Use an image that conveys a benefit wherever possible.

44. Pay attention to design

A picture tell a thousand words. Good design can do the same, with or without a picture. Pay attention to your layout, the size and style of fonts, keep logos to the bottom of your ad and make your headline stand out. Open your local paper and look at a page full of ads. Which one stands out? Why? Remember to design according to your media and the way your ad will be presented.

45. Make your ad skim-proof

Try skimming through a magazine in less than two minutes. Then think about what you have done. If you are like most people, you looked at a few headlines and looked at the pictures and their captions. So if you want people to notice your ad, give them what they want – a headline, a picture and a caption. Often with posters, that's all you have time for, but even with longer print ads, that's what you should start with.

46. Use powerful words

There are powerful words out there. 'Sex, free, new, guaranteed, sale, special offer, exclusive, limited.' They work - so use them. How many times has Daz washing powder been "New Daz" in its fifty year lifetime? A change of formula, no matter how slight, can make an old product new and exciting. What one 'power word' sums up your product or brand? Use it in your headlines. Ads may be seen by thousands, but they are read by one person at a time. Talk to them in your headline – use 'you' or 'your' wherever possible.

47. Make them an offer in your headline

Always try to make an offer in your headline and make sure it relates to a benefit. "Save money on..." "You can look great with..." It doesn't always have to be so direct, but the benefit offer needs to be in the headline. "Drop a dress size in two weeks – guaranteed" is a powerful headline for a woman looking to lose weight. The offer is implicit and confirmed by the guarantee.

48. Address your advert to your target audience

If you have a specific target audience, then let them know you are talking to them. If your business is a garage, then you want to get the attention of people who have their own car. Start your headline with 'Car Owners – 'then go on to make your offer 'get a free MOT with your service'.

49. Dare to be different

It takes a brave advertiser to do something different in order to stand out from the crowd. Ad agencies almost always come up with a great idea they won't even bother to pitch to their client because it will never get through the approval process of management and then the board and then the chairman. Look at your competitors ads. Look at the other ads in the media you are going to use. Then think about what image, headline or design is going to get you noticed.

50. Always test your advert

By now you may have noticed that this is a mantra! When you have your headline and your image and your design, test them. Show them to as many people as you can – especially people in your target audience. Get their reaction. Check what they think the image means to them. Make sure they understood and interpreted the headline as you wanted. When you run the ads check your response level, and try different



Part 6: Powerful Copy Techniques

There are many ways to say the same thing. Good copy writers know that some techniques work better than others. Don't be afraid of cliché – the reason some things are used a lot is that they work, and familiar language helps readers get your message quickly.

51. Choose the right tone of voice for your audience

Always write in the language and style of your target audience. Snowboarders speak differently to bank managers – speak to them how they speak to each other. Your ad may reach thousands of people, but only one person reads it at a time. Write it to speak to one person. And remember to always be enthusiastic. It may not come naturally to us British to shout it from the rooftops, but if you're not up beat about your product, don't expect potential customers to be convinced.

52. Include an invitation

Invitation is a great way to get people involved and willing to try your brand. "See for yourself", "feel the softness", "smell the freshness", "come along today and save...". The invitation not only encourages response, but it implies your confidence in your brand.

53. Use comparison to demonstrate superior benefits

If you have direct competition then this is a great technique. It allows you to introduce benefits and explain why your brand is better than the competition. This can be as simple as a list of features with the question "who else offers all these...?" If you are using price as a key differentiator, then you can use "does competitor X offer all these features... for only £xx.xx?" Don't forget, you get to chose the benefits for comparison so you always have the advantage even if competitor X beats your product on other features.

54. Use testimonials to add weight

If you have a product, service or company that is not yet known by your potential customers, then they are going to be wary of you. Familiarity is a powerful selling point, think of the family visiting a new town and going to McDonalds rather than a restaurant they know nothing about. Testimonials are a powerful way of getting past this. We all like recommendations, and they carry weight even if they come from a stranger. Use names, addresses, and photos where ever possible to add credibility to your quotes.

55. Use endorsements to add credibility

These are really a special kind of testimonial. A celebrity endorsement can be difficult and expensive, but often an expert opinion can help. Familiar faces help to get attention, and the right person can lend credibility to a product without even actually saying outright that they use or approve it.

Organisations can also be useful for endorsements, for example the contractors who are 'council approved' or members of the right standards body. Some service industries live or die by their client lists – tacit demonstration that other, respected organisations think they are good.

56. Demonstrate your benefits in pictures and copy

If you can demonstrate what benefits your brand offers, then do it. Illustrate with photos whenever you can, saying a bucket is strong is one thing – showing a car parked with an upturned bucket under each wheel really demonstrates it. Show your product in use and with happy customers enjoying the benefits it provides. Don't be afraid of long copy for this style of copy. The more you say, the more convincing it is, and once they have been grabbed by your headline and opening para, they will be interested enough to follow your points.

"Testimonials are among the most powerful advertising techniques. They convey client satisfaction, and third party recommendations. Celebrity endorsements do the same, but with the added weight of the celebrity's image and profile."

- Mr R H, Westcliff on Sea, Essex

57. Make explicit guarantees wherever you can

Some products and services always have some level of guarantee, but many don't. Either way, the confidence to offer an unusual level of guarantee can really help to set you apart from your competition. If appropriate, a moneyback guarantee is a powerful way of getting people to try a service or product. It gives them peace of mind and greater incentive to take the risk of trying something new.

58. Provide that personal touch in your advertising

"I liked it so much, I bought the company". OK, please don't do badly acted, cheesy commercials with the MD talking direct to camera. But another way of providing peace of mind is to personalise your advert. If you are selling a service put your name and picture to it. It is a powerful endorsement as it demonstrates your confidence in satisfying the customer and lets them know you are prepared to stand by your offer. Think of looking for a plumber in Yellow Pages, would you go for ad with a mobile number as its only point of contact or "Hi, I'm Dave Jones, with 25 years in the trade I guarantee all my work personally..." next to his smiling picture.

59. Get your timing right

Timing can provide great opportunities. Even simple things like the January sales mean that you can make an announcement about your products and prices. Linking your advert to an event or occasion, whether local or national can be very effective. Keep an eye on the current news and look for guerrilla opportunities to link your brand to high profile news stories, or events, or celebrities.

60. Use Before and After demonstrations

Perhaps the most clichéd of all the copy techniques, before and after still works well. It offers a highly visual way of developing your copy (remember to keep the before picture smaller and less obtrusive than the after one for greater impact). Naturally this technique lends itself to certain products better than others, but with a little creativity it can be used for a wide variety of brands and services. And the reason it is so clichéd is that it works, so see if you can make it work for you

61. Make your call to action as easy as possible

All copy must end with a call to action – tell the reader/ listener/viewer what to do next. But make it as easy as possible. Provide coupons, provide accurate contact details, tell them which shops stock your brand, and if you can provide a free telephone number. Give them your web address for more information. Whatever you want them to do, make it as easy as possible and as timely. A poster on the way into the shopping centre which tells them which shop to visit to buy your product means it will be top of their minds at just the right time!

Part 7: Design and Style

Design is a vital element of your advert. The use of colours, images, typefaces and layout determine whether your advert is noticed in the first place, and then whether it is read for long enough to get your message across. It determines many aspects of the way your advert is perceived and also of the image of your brand. No matter how good your product is, or how compelling your words are, without good design your advert will not be effective.

62. Make sure you attract their attention

As mentioned before, AIDA (attention, interest, desire and action) is an important part of your advert. The design needs to attract attention in the first place. Good design stands out from the thousands of messages processed by the brain every day. You have one and half seconds to attract the average reader's attention. A strong layout will stand out from the page (or poster, or whatever) with an arresting image or headline, or preferably, both.

63. Ensure your design keeps their interest

Attention is only the first part of the equation. You need to keep your target's interest in what you have to say. Design plays an important part in this. Poor layout with a difficult to read font (or worse fonts) will stop your target as quickly as badly written copy. Good design makes copy easy to read and keeps your audience interested by matching the tone and style of the message.

64. Get a logical flow through your design

In the same way that copy must flow logically from point to point, so must design. Make logical use of fonts and point sizes, with the largest for headlines and a larger font for strap lines or opening paragraphs. Ensure all images and copy are laid out to flow logically (from top left to bottom right, just as in a page of text). Other options may look more exciting and help attract interest, but will lose readers before they get to your call to action. Make sure your headline or attention-grabber is at the top. Many advertisers make the mistake of putting their company/brand name and contact details at the top of an ad, never likely to grab the readers attention in the split second that you have!

65. Design your ad to be easy to read

Make sure you are careful about what fonts you use and how you use them. Once you have got someone paying attention you must make it as easy as possible for them to keep reading. Many fonts are quite difficult to read at the smaller point sizes suited to body copy, but may work well for a headline. And avoid the temptation to use small fonts to squeeze a lot of copy into a small space. If you really cannot afford or get more space, then edit down your copy to fit. It is better to lose a couple of words than lose all your readers.

66. Make your design relevant to your message

There are many graphic 'tricks' to attract attention, but you only want to attract the attention of the target audience for your brand, so make your design relevant to your message. In the same way that tone of voice needs to match that of your target group, then so does the overall design of your advert. Think about who you are trying to reach and design accordingly. Five year olds like strong primary colours, most accounting professionals don't.

67. Keep your ad design relevant to your brand and corporate image

Your advert's design says a lot about your corporate and brand image. You will have spent time, money and effort establishing identity, awareness and an image for your brand. Make sure your advert design helps to reinforce this image at all times. In addition to the obvious benefits of helping to develop your brand identity, if you design an advert that doesn't match then it will jar with the audience and not quite ring true. This will both reduce the impact of the advert and undermine your brand image.

68. Design your ad for the right media and publication

Where your advert is going makes a big difference to the design. Obviously different media require different styles – e.g. an outdoor poster can only carry very few words and needs to have immediate impact on passing trade, whereas a washroom poster provides much more opportunity for in-depth copy. It is also important to consider the publication you are putting your advert in and how your advert will look on the page. Will it stand out against other adverts, will it provide an appropriate tone for the style of magazine, is the imagery appropriate?

69. Highlight your Call to Action

AIDA ends with action and your advert ends with a call to action. Use good design to highlight this message. Make sure your flow leads directly to the call to action and make sure the action is clear, simple and powerful. Draw the eye to it and use a bolder or larger font to highlight its importance. Certain things work well, e.g. many direct mail letters use a "p.s." to repeat the call to action, as this stands out from the letter and is often looked at even if the main body copy is overlooked.

70. Use professional designers and agencies

Design is a skilled mix of science and art. It is also subjective and difficult to quantify. Wherever you can it is always a good idea to use an agency to take advantage of years of training and experience. In the same way that a good copy writer can dramatically improve the effectiveness and response rates for an advert, so will a proficient designer.

71. Test your designs

OK, back to mantra number one! Test your advert designs as widely as possible before committing to print. Show them to as many people as you can – especially people in your target audience. Get their reaction. Check what they think the design conveys to them. When you run the ads check your response levels, and try different designs until you get the best response.



Part 8: Key words and phrases

Experiment with different words and phrases, and test them. There are many words and phrases that are the staple of copy writers. They may seem hackneyed and clichéd, but there is a reason for that – they work! Don't be afraid to use clichés, they are like shorthand for your audience, familiar phrases with familiar meanings, and so are a great way to get your message across easily. And don't be afraid of enthusiasm and superlatives – if you can't convey enthusiasm about your brand or product, then don't expect other people to be tempted to try it.

72. Keep your words and phrases relevant to your target audience

If mantra number one is 'test' then this must be mantra number two: remember who your target audience is and speak to them in the right tone of voice. There are words and phrases which are truly effective in advertising, but they won't work unless they are appropriate. 'Bargain' is a powerful word but it won't be the most attractive one to a large government department installing a vital computer system who are far more concerned with robustness, security, and other similar qualities.

73. Use "You and Your"

'You and your' are the most powerful words in an advert. Remember to write to one person, as if you were having a conversation with them. "Do your carpets need cleaning?", "You can benefit from...", "The widget you've always dreamed of". Your target market may be a mass audience, but they see your message individually, so write to them one at a time. You know it makes sense!

74. Use words that attract attention in your Headlines

Some words work best in headlines and can really attract attention. Remember not to be worried about clichés. They work just as well in headlines as in body copy. Try using some of these words alongside your message/brand/product:

| | | |
|------------|-----------------|---------------|
| ANNOUNCING | INTRODUCING | GUARANTEED |
| NEW | LIMITED | SPECIAL OFFER |
| YOU/YOUR | AT LAST | DO YOU NEED |
| BARGAIN | EXCLUSIVE OFFER | SALE |

75. Use connector words to keep things flowing

It is important to make your advert flow from point to point to call to action. Break the logical chain and you risk losing your reader's attention. However, sometimes it isn't easy to find a logical way to get from one passage to another. To keep the flow of language going you need to use a connector phrase. With the right words and phrases, you can move on, and even if your points don't follow logically, your language will:

| | | |
|------------|-----------------|---------------|
| ANNOUNCING | INTRODUCING | GUARANTEED |
| NEW | LIMITED | SPECIAL OFFER |
| YOU/YOUR | AT LAST | DO YOU NEED |
| BARGAIN | EXCLUSIVE OFFER | SALE |

76. Probably the worst advertising in the world

Advertising has to be truthful, and not just by law. If you cannot substantiate your claims about your brand, then you can do it mortal harm in the eyes of your target market. There are a lot of ways of appearing to make a claim while carefully avoiding doing so by clever use of semantics and language. You often see the use of words like 'probably, possibly, claimed to be, considered by some'. This is always dangerous ground, usually transparent to your audience and destroys your credibility. Any brand has good things going for it. Use them to differentiate yourself and concentrate your ads on those real benefits

77. Use active phrasing in your advert

Make your adverts not only positive, but active. Try the following headlines:

Riding, trekking and more

Come riding this weekend

The first tells you this is an advert for a riding centre. So does the second, but it makes the word riding active. 'This weekend' encourages you to act on the advert and immediately. It doesn't limit it, you know the centre will be there later. It is, however, a more powerful message just by being phrased actively.

78. Keep concentrating on the benefits

Your target audience are selfish, lazy, and careless. At least they are when it comes to your advertising. They only want to know "what's in it for me?". So tell them. Use words that convey your product/service/brand's benefits. These are your most powerful words. Remember features aren't benefits, they are a way to get benefits. A Volvo safety cell with fifteen airbags isn't a benefit. A safer driving experience is.

79. Let your enthusiasm for your brand really show

Ok so we're British and not American. We don't like the hard sell. We don't like excited hyperbole and exaggeration. But you cannot write an understated and reserved advert and expect it to work. Your enthusiasm for your brand must show through. Use words that convey that enthusiasm – 'best, cheapest, fastest, best value, most satisfying, wide range, guaranteed, successful, satisfied clients, helpful, convenient, affordable, brilliant, unique, lovingly crafted, newest, freshest'.

80. Be careful to avoid jargon

It is usually important to avoid jargon and uncommon abbreviations. Remember who your audience is and write for them, not as an industry expert. Be careful to avoid pastiche when trying to find the tone and voice of your advert. This is particularly true when dealing with youth and fashion markets where terms of speech change very rapidly and an out of date phrase can destroy the credibility of an advert.

81. Experiment with different words and phrases, and test them

Yes it's back again. Test, test and test again. It is amazing how changing one or two words can change the effectiveness of your advert. Remember, with some advertising, such as posters, you are only using a dozen words, so each one becomes exceedingly important. Try out various ways of saying what you want to say on people from your target audience. Testing often seems difficult, expensive, time consuming, and maybe even unnecessary, but it can stop you wasting money on buying advertising media and not getting the most from it. It really pays back in the long run.

Part 9: Testing and research

Advertising effectiveness is difficult to measure. There are many different aspects to a good ad – design, copy, media, timing, and so many external factors which have an impact, it can be hard to conclude anything. However, getting the basics of research and testing right will make sure you get the most out of your advertising budget.

82. Take a good look at your market

Before developing a marketing campaign, or doing any creative work, you need to take a good look at your market. Make sure you know who you are trying to talk to, what benefits they are looking for, what pricing suits your market, what really motivates them to buy. Research your market to find opportunities and for appropriate timing for running your campaign. Remember to look at wider factors that might have an impact, such as economic factors.

83. Take a good look at your competition

You can't keep too close an eye on your competition. Always try and be aware of what they are doing, and are likely to do. Do they have any new products in the pipeline that they are likely to launch soon? Do they advertise to a regular pattern, allowing you to go head-to-head with them, or advertise when they don't? What style of advertising do they use? Which media are they using?

84. Review your product and its benefits

Before you start designing your campaign, research your product. Ask your buyers why they have chosen you. Ask people who bought your competitors' products why they didn't chose yours. Make sure you know what people perceive to be the benefits of your brand – remember only their perception matters, reality doesn't count at all. Make sure you know what the most important benefits are for them. If you're selling coffee and the customers only concern is taste, then it's no good advertising value. They will simply buy your competitors brand that focuses its promotion on taste.

85. Research your potential media

In many ways media is the easiest part of the research process. Ratecards and readership information are easily available. You can see which media your competition is using. But if you research alternative media and mix traditional media and the less obvious you can see real benefits. Make sure your target market read, see, or view the media that you are planning to use. And remember to research the ads already in that media, as well as the copy style of the media, to help you design advertising to work well in those publications.

86. Test your copy as you develop your ad

Always test your advertising while you are in the process of writing and designing it. This doesn't mean you have to spend thousands on research agencies, often it is appropriate to do it yourself. When you have written an advert, show it to a few people. Colleagues and friends will usually help out. Where you can, try and talk to members of your target audience. Ask them to read it aloud – it is common for something to be interpreted differently to the way it was written. Ask them questions about it. Get some feedback. Show them different variations and find out which one works best. Then find out why. Then refine your ad to be the most effective it can be.

87. Test different designs and styles

Design and images are an extremely important factor in advertising. In the same way as you test the copy for your ads, you should test different layouts, images, typefaces. Get feedback from your potential audience and design according to what they say. Make up dummy copies of your ad, put them on foamboard or cardboard and let people see samples and tell you which one works best, and why.

88. Benchmark where you are before you start your advertising

The first thing you need to know, if you want to know how effective your advertising is, is where you are now. Having defined what you want your advert to achieve (awareness, leads, direct sales, or whatever) then make sure you know what your starting point is. Before the campaign starts, gather your data. How many calls a day are coming in? What level are sales running at? How many people are aware of your brand? How do your target audience rate your brand compared to your competitors?

89. Measure the impact your ads are having

You have your starting point. Now you need to measure the effectiveness of your campaign. And if it is longer campaign you need to monitor it periodically. Has the advertising generated any new leads? Which version of the advert generates most interest? Which media works best? Try different variations and measure their effect to see which version you should continue with. Don't forget, advertising often needs to be visible for a while before its impact is felt and often the effect on sales can last for quite some time after the advertising campaign has finished.



90. Ask new buyers where they found you or your product

When you get calls coming in, or new purchasers, always ask them about your advertising. Simple techniques and basic logging can really help. If you have a telephone enquiry, never let them go without first asking; "where did you hear about us/our product?". Make sure coupons are marked or coded to tell you which ad design they were and which publication they came from.

91. Give yourself time to start small and test effectiveness

We are often pressured to rush into advertising – sales are low, Christmas is coming, the weather has changed. As a result, many campaigns are not only hastily put together, but they are rushed into the media, and their impact and effectiveness is left to luck. With good planning you can test your advertising before committing to your major media campaign. Larger advertisers can use smaller geographical areas to test advertising before going national. The rest of us can often use different ads in different media and test for results, before committing the bulk of our budget to a full blown campaign. Remember to give yourself time for testing when devising your campaign.

Part 10: Using Experts

There are many experts who can help with your advertising campaign. From full blown agencies who cover the whole process, to smaller agencies that will cover one part of the process for you – copy writers, designers, researchers, media buyers, photographers, picture libraries, recording studios. As with all services it can be hard to select who to work with, how to get the best from them, and how to know how much value they are adding to the process. The following tips should help.

92. Agree clear targets and objectives

Always have clear parameters and objectives for the work you are going to do together. Clear targets produce clear thinking. Start with a brief and make sure everyone on both sides understands and agrees your goals before you start. Be flexible when you need to, but ensure new goals are defined as you proceed.

93. Research who will be best to work with

It is easy to find agencies – Yellow Pages will do the job. You need to find one who will provide what you want, will be able to work with you, and will add value to your business. Look for advertising you like and find out who has done that work. Find out what other work they have done, and talk to their current clients. Some won't talk to you, but if they are not directly in competition, many will. They can be a great source of information on how agencies approach their work, and a gold mine of other information.

94. Start by making sure the chemistry is right

Always start with a chemistry meeting. There are a lot of portfolios out there, each full of great creative work. You need to look behind the samples and see how the agency gets to their finished creative work. Ask them about their thought processes and how they like to work. You are going to have work closely with these people so make sure they think like you do – it may not be scientific, but your relationship needs the right 'feel' to succeed.

95. Look to establish a true partnership

The really successful client/agency relationships are genuine partnerships. Where people work as closely as colleagues inside the same organisation, sharing goals, ideas and criticisms freely. Make sure you are prepared to enter into a real two way dialogue and allow time for the relationship to develop and flourish.



96. Be prepared to give them time and input

Good creative work is based on understanding. You have to give your agencies time and knowledge to work properly. You have to be prepared to spend time on explaining your brand, your audience, your thoughts. You need to be prepared to share your research and knowledge of your brand, the good and the bad. Sometimes it can take as long as, or even longer than, sitting down and creating your own advert. But the additional expertise and experience brought to the creative process will pay dividends.

97. Problem solve together

You'll gain many advantages if you engage in collaborative problem solving with your agency. Don't draw tight boundaries between what you do. Many clients feel it is entirely up to their agency to come up with creative ideas in complete isolation. Work together and brainstorm ideas freely - the results will flow.

98. Set your budgets and be clear about them up front

There are as many agency rates out there as there are agencies. Not only do you need to set realistic advertising budgets, but you need to make sure your agency knows what they are before they start work on your campaign. So set a budget range and state it clearly up front. It will guide your experts as to what can be achieved and how best to achieve it.

99. Expect to get what you pay for

Everyone likes a bargain, and a lot of 'talent' can be hired at great value rates, but as with most things you get what you are prepared to pay for. Have a clear idea of how much value you are expecting to add to your business and what you are prepared to pay for it. Your chosen expert may be willing to provide a discount, perhaps in exchange for a guaranteed volume of work, but good people respect the value of their own work and expect to be compensated accordingly.

100. Always carry out post-mortems at the end of projects

Campaigns should be broken down into projects that can be identified and quantified. At the end of each project you and your agency should sit down and review the success of the project and lessons to be learned for the next one. It's the quickest way to raise quality and keep moving forward. Remember to include all your key decision makers in the review and to focus on the positives first. It sets the tone for the meeting, and makes it easier for people to handle constructive criticisms.

101. Make the time for meetings with your agencies

There are too many meetings in the average business day. However, avoid the temptation to handle your agency relationship by email, fax and phone. Particularly with the creative review and development process. It is too easy for instructions to be misinterpreted, wasting time for everyone, and you miss out on discussion that can further the creative process. Make time to meet and you will save time and improve quality.



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