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ADVERTISING



“80-20 Rule” strikes again!

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When most businesspeople think about their own advertising, the tendency among some of them is to focus on their *message*. “How jazzy, how edgy, how clever can we make this?” Or “How can I ‘one-up’ my buddies at the golf course, (or thumb my nose at a competitor) with a killer commercial?” And, of course, for some, it’s “What do we do to win an award in the next creative competition?”

No question, the *message* is important. Vitaly important. But, in the big picture, the *medium* for the message is just as important.

In fact, from a cost standpoint, the medium is frequently *more* important than the message! Because, for most advertisers, four dollars are spent on media costs for every one dollar that’s spent in crafting the message. (That old 80-20 arch-rule strikes again.)

One unsung hero of the advertising team is the media planner. That’s the one who’s shepherding the 80% of your dollar, while others are concentrating on the 20%. The media planner helps the advertiser determine where the message should go. Not based on the planner’s own favorite shows, favorite reads, favorite Web sites. Nor

based on the advertiser’s own favorites, for that matter. But, rather, based on:

- where the qualified audience for the advertiser’s products or services can be found
- then, how to reach that qualified audience the most times at the least practical cost

Demographics — the science of analyzing people, their groupings and characteristics — is inherent in the media planning/selection process. Most small businesses cannot afford their own original demographic studies. But you do have three great resources at your disposal: 1) your own customer data bases, 2) plenty of existing demographic data from other, “secondary research” sources, 3) *American Demographics* magazine (published just north of us in Ithaca) is incredibly informative and affordable. Delve into as much of this demographic raw material as you can before developing your plan for reaching your audience.

Audience surveys (Nielsen and Arbitron are two of the household names in broadcast audience research) help the media planner to know who watches/listens to what.

A marketing communications company

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With a tight demographic target to aim at, and current data for media audience delivery, the professional media planner applies metrics to this task of achieving cost efficiency. Measures like:

- cost-per-thousand readers/viewers/listeners/site visitors
- cost-per-impression

But the real unit of measure is what we call “cost-per-point.” “CPP” is a shop-talk phrase, not unlike “kilowatt-hour” (“KWH”). Or “gross domestic product” (“GDP”). We’ve heard these, perhaps. Yet might not fully comprehend them. Perhaps all the layperson needs to know is that cost-per-point is the cost to reach one percent of your target audience.

Though it’s a simple concept — and one you can work out with pencil and paper using basic math skills — there are so many variations of how to arrive at CPP (or how to determine an optimal level) that specialized software has been developed to do the tedious parts of the task. Designed to help with multiple “what-if” variations in search of the best scenario. In the hands of a trained and seasoned media planner, that software is one of the most powerful tools available to the advertiser for achieving the most efficient use of the 80% of the dollar. (The STRATA analytical system is the one we use in our organization.)

Repetition of your message in the particular medium chosen is one of the basic principles of advertising mechanics. It’s the most “mission-critical” element in the process. But, how much is enough? How much is too much? There is a point of diminishing returns. Where is that point for your market, your audience, your message, your medium? The professional media planner can help you find that answer for your business.

Another critical factor in media planning is something called “media mix.” Here, the media-minded advertiser, assisted by the media planner, typically asks:

- “Can I reach my audience with TV only. Or do I also need direct mail?”
- “Is ‘drive-time’ radio all I need, or do I want a ‘run-of-station’ schedule for my message?”
- “If I go with billboards, how many? And where?”
- “Is this message a print message? (Is my audience print-oriented?) Or does my message/audience point to Web advertising?”
- “Do I go with Yellow Pages/Yellow Book directories? Or do I go with search engines?”
- “If my product/service needs to be demonstrated, which single medium is most appropriate?”
- “If what I sell is pegged to a certain generation or gender, are some media more appropriate than others?”
- “Mine is a business-to-business model. I know what my competitors do. But I am not sure what I should be doing.”

For most advertisers, there is seldom one single medium that covers all the bases. But, frustratingly, few advertisers can afford all the different media types they ideally need. That’s where the craft of media planning earns its keep: getting the most from what you have to spend in your “real world” media budget.

You’ll find that, in good campaign planning, the 80%-ers and the 20%-ers on the advertising team are working from the same sheet of music, ensuring that the medium and the message are tuned to each other and working their hardest on behalf of the advertiser.

That’s because, in the end, the challenge facing the advertiser really is... “Over 3,000 advertising messages per day. How will yours get through?”