

Chapter 1

Advertising: Mastering the Art of Promotion

In This Chapter

- ▶ Being aware of the advertising around you (as if you could avoid it)
 - ▶ Putting the fundamentals of good advertising to work for you
 - ▶ Taking a few lessons from the pros
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Advertising is a \$300 billion industry in the United States alone. Plunkett Research, Ltd. (the company that provided this figure) points out that the large numbers don't stop there. In the United States, advertisers flood the following mediums in droves:

- ✔ 1,749 broadcast TV stations (and that's not including cable and satellite TV outlets)
- ✔ 13,599 radio stations
- ✔ 2,250 daily and Sunday newspapers

And those figures don't even take into consideration the thousands of magazines, direct mail, Web sites, blogs, outdoor advertising (billboards, bus shelters, and so on), or specialty or alternative advertising, which includes everything from airplane banners at the beach to tchotchkes, small items like tote bags, pens, and t-shirts that merchants and businesses give away to remind consumers to do business with them.

With all these choices of how to get your message out there, how do you decide what's the best medium to reach the customers you're looking for? And how can you develop an ad campaign that won't get lost in the morass? You don't have to hire an ad agency (though you can: Chapter 16 offers guidance on how best to do this, and Chapter 20 gives you ten ways to know whether you need outside help). But you can also do it yourself, and this book tells how.

In this chapter, I fill you in on the basics of advertising — what’s effective and what isn’t. Then I give you a short course on all your advertising options — radio, TV (network and cable), magazines and newspapers, direct mail, outdoor, the Web, and more — and I show how you can put them to work for you. Finally, I end with stories about two legends of advertising as well as brief introductions of more recent ad giants, because if you focus on the best and figure out what they’ve done well, you can try to incorporate some of their genius into your own advertising — and come out ahead of the competition.

Making Advertising Work



Effective advertising sells a product or a service that fulfills all the promises made about it. On the other hand, effective advertising also sells inferior products or services, but only once!

So what makes advertising effective? Effective advertising is:

- ✓ **Creative:** It delivers the advertising message in a fresh, new way.
- ✓ **Hard-hitting:** Its headline, copy, or graphic element stops readers or listeners dead in their tracks.
- ✓ **Memorable:** It ensures that the audience will remember *your* business when they think about the products and services you’re selling.
- ✓ **Clear:** It presents its message in a concise, uncomplicated, easy-to-grasp manner.
- ✓ **Informative:** It enlightens the audience about your business and products, while giving them important reasons to buy from you.
- ✓ **Distinctive:** It is unique and immediately recognizable as yours.

The well-established brands that most people use every day — brands like Coca-Cola and Pepsi, McDonald’s and Burger King, Budweiser and Miller, Bayer and Advil, Ford and Chevy, Tide and Cheer — live up to the promises made in their advertising. In fact, the products live up to the promise in such a dramatic fashion that those products have become a part of the everyday lives of millions of people. These products have been *branded*, which simply means that when you think of soft drinks, fast food, beer, pain relievers, cars, or laundry detergents, these brands come to mind. As surely as the cowboys of the Old West branded the haunches of their cattle, these products have been branded into your psyche — and the psyches of millions of other consumers.



When you begin to create advertising for your product or service, keep these suggestions in mind:

- ✓ **Don't make promises you can't live up to.** Although your ad may draw more people to your product initially, you can't retain these people as loyal customers in the long run if you make promises you can't keep.
- ✓ **Identify the best features of whatever it is you're selling and develop your advertising around these features.** Think about how your product stands out from the competition, what sets it apart, and then focus on those attributes.
- ✓ **Try to create a memorable advertising message for your product.** You want people to think of your store, your product, or your professional service whenever they're in the market for such a thing.



If your message is creative, clear, and concise, if your product or service is something that can truly benefit people and live up to its hype, then you're on the road to producing effective advertising.



If your advertising makes bold promises about your product, you may convince a lot of people to try it. But if these people buy your product and give it a try, and the product turns out to be less than you advertised it to be, you will most certainly never see those consumers again. Think about it: How many times have you responded to an advertising message for a new, improved, astounding product, only to be disappointed with the item after you tried it? You probably even felt like you'd been ripped off. If your advertising message leaves consumers with the same feeling, you simply won't get anywhere.

Getting to Know Your Media Options

Advertising comes in all shapes and sizes. And a big part of developing your ad plans and campaign is to decide which mediums are best suited to advertising your particular business. Following is a brief overview of your options, with details from Plunkett Research, Ltd. to give you a ballpark idea on how many billions of dollars are spent annually in each medium in the United States.

Regarding radio

Radio advertising is a \$20 billion business — and it has expanded both because listeners can now tune in on the Internet and because of the development of satellite radio (Sirius and XM subscriber-based programming). But

it's also competing with MP3 devices, which means there may be fewer listeners to any given radio station or program.

But if your business appeals to consumers who're likely to subscribe to this type of programming, or if you can reach them on broadcast radio during drive time or particular radio programs (especially those with celebrity hosts), then you should consider this medium. Chapter 8 provides guidance on developing memorable radio spots, and Chapter 14 offers information on buying radio time to maximize your reach — and your budget.

Rating TV

TV is a \$68 billion business — and that includes the almost 2,000 broadcast stations plus the many cable and satellite TV stations. The growth in the number of stations has actually made it easier for advertisers, because TV programming is so much more targeted. For example, the audience for The History Channel is probably very different from, say, Lifetime or Oxygen or WE, the Women's Entertainment channel.

Still, TV advertising is the most expensive medium (even with the tips offered in Chapter 9 on how to create TV commercials and keep down the costs!), so you should consider TV commercials only if you can afford them. TV is still a mass medium, even with the more-focused channels mentioned, and your ad budget may be better spent on a more narrowly focused media. But if you decide TV is for you, see Chapter 15 for guidance on how to find the right station and negotiate the best deal for your ad and your business.

Contemplating print

Print advertising encompasses both newspapers (daily and Sunday papers), which is a \$49 billion business, and magazines, which is a \$21 billion business. Newspapers are obviously a good choice if your business is regional and you're targeting a broad consumer base; magazines are more-specifically tailored to different readers — for example, a subscriber to *Glamour* probably isn't also subscribing to, say, *Maxim*, though the media kits of each provide the details on the number and demographics of the subscriber base. Chapter 7 offers insight on how to write and design eye-catching print ads, and Chapter 13 offers ideas for how to choose the right publication and negotiate a good rate for your ad.

Keep in mind, though, that many people who used to get information from newspapers and magazines now have the additional option of online subscriptions — to either those same publications or to alternatives that have never been printed on paper but are available only on the Internet. Chapters 6 and 12 cover how to create and buy ad space in this new media.

Imitation: The sincerest form of flattery

Every now and then I see or hear an image advertisement that is so creative, so wonderfully conceived, and so (relatively) inexpensively produced that I wish I had written it myself. It has been said that no original ideas are out there, but occasionally a fresh, new approach to delivering the same old message comes along. And I file it away in my memory as something that, someday, I may want to imitate. If the ad is especially impressive, I even find out which agency is responsible for it and write it a congratulatory note.

One such ad was a radio spot for Berkeley Farms, a major Northern California dairy. Instead of creating a straight, consumer-directed ad extolling the virtues of its milk, the company created a recruitment ad for “new employees.” Instead of just telling its audience what superior milk they can take home when they buy the Berkeley Farms brand, a warm, motherly, female voice opens the spot with the wonderful line, “If you’re a cow, I want to tell you about Berkeley Farms — it’s a great place to work.” She goes on to tell any cows who may be listening that they can expect to be fed only the finest hays and grains, which a full-time vet

is always on call in case they get sick, that their stalls are always kept clean and tidy, and that they are foolish cows indeed if they chose to work anywhere else.

This spot is a memorable one because it uses a creative twist — talking to the cows, not the consumers — to a great advantage. Hey, if this dairy is good enough for the cows, then it must be good enough for you! And this spot can undoubtedly inspire me to think of a fresh point-of-view for some retail commercial I write in the future.

When you sit down to write advertising for your business, using ideas and techniques from other advertising to help you find your own “creative hook” is perfectly okay. No, I am *not* giving you permission to lift someone else’s copy verbatim or to steal a concept out of hand. But good advertising done by others can be a great source of creative inspiration. Even the big boys do it. One advertising agency comes out with a fresh, new look in its ads, something that hasn’t been seen before, and everyone else jumps all over it. It happens all the time. Just be sure you know the difference between imitating and plagiarizing, and stick to the former.

Musing upon direct mail

Direct mail is a \$45 billion business, and it’s alive and well even with the growth of e-mail and other Internet advertising. Charitable organizations still send pitches for funds to continue their good works (like The Red Cross, The American Cancer Society, and Doctors Without Borders). Similarly, cultural institutions use direct mail to solicit donor support, which they need to supplement ticket prices from their audiences (think of your local theater company, public radio station, and even PBS). And direct mail includes the myriad catalogs that fill all of our mailboxes — from Land’s End to L.L. Bean to Victoria’s Secret, to J.Crew (to name just a few). Chapter 10 focuses on developing strong direct-mail messages that can stand out among the abundance in the mailbox.

Scrutinizing outdoor advertising

Outdoor advertising includes everything from billboards on highways to ads on bus kiosks, in subway cars, on taxis, or even on benches and other signage. As a \$6 billion industry, it's a small part of overall annual ad expenditures, but if you think it's right for your business, Chapter 11 tells how to choose the type of outdoor ad that can work best for you and how to design memorable advertising in this medium.

Ogling online ads

Last, but by no means least, is the newest ad medium — online — even though the Internet hardly seems “new”; still, it's only been since the mid-'90s that companies have used the Web to advertise products, services, and businesses. Chapter 6 offers the pros and cons of online advertising on various Web sites (as well as how to develop your own), and it tells how to create various types of online ad formats, do e-mail advertising, and create your own blog. Chapter 12 picks up where Chapter 6 leaves off and helps you with the financial side of online ads: hiring someone to help you create ads or your Web site and buying space on other sites.

Poring over publicity

Technically, publicity isn't really part of advertising, but good publicity can serve to advertise your business. Publicity is really about getting someone *else* to advertise your business. Basically, you're calling attention to what you're doing in a way that your newspaper may want to report on it, or a magazine may want to write a feature article about your business, or a TV show host or radio host may be so intrigued by something you've done that they talk about you on their shows. The two chapters in Part IV offer lots of great ideas and success stories on how some businesses have done this successfully.



Where your advertising appears is every bit as important as what message it contains — maybe even more so. Advertising is a numbers game: You want to spend as little money as possible, as effectively as possible, to reach as many people as possible, in order to make your phone and your cash register ring.



Consider your many media options very carefully. You can waste your advertising dollars very easily by using the wrong media for your advertising goals. Mass media advertising *is* affordable (turn to the chapters in Part III for more information on costs). But so-called “affordable” advertising in the wrong



A spectacularly ineffective advertising vehicle

One of the other tenants in our office building — a small insurance company specializing in assigned-risk auto coverage (for customers whose driving records aren't exactly stellar) — recently unveiled its latest, breakthrough advertising vehicle. And I do mean *vehicle*.

I came to work one morning and couldn't miss it, parked out on the curb in all its glory. The company had pounded out the dents on a 1960s Volkswagen bus, spent \$50 to have it freshly painted a sparkling bathtub white, and bolted a 4-by-8-foot, double-faced billboard to the roof to advertise its business. Because the old wreck needed brakes, our business neighbors quit driving it around town and parked the thing conspicuously in the parking lot in front of our

building, much to the chagrin of the other tenants. The sign that sat atop this moveable beast, purportedly to tell the world about the company's insurance business, included no less than 32 words (including *sure thing* and *no driver refused*) and an 11-digit phone number, all arranged helter-skelter in 6 different fonts and painted in 3 different colors.

The bus was a gigantic waste of advertising dollars. But the business owner probably thought, like so many small to mid-sized retailers and service businesses do, that he couldn't afford "real" advertising. So he tried the VW bus routine instead. I don't think I have to tell you to avoid this kind of mistake at all costs.

media is a gigantic waste of your dollars and your time. No matter how affordable the media is, if it doesn't bring customers through your door, you aren't really saving money. On the contrary, you're draining your limited budget without being the least-bit effective.

Lessons from the Legends: Figuring Out Your Advertising Needs



Although your advertising may not come close to the greatest ads created by the top ad agencies (after all, that's not your intent in the first place), you can still gather greatness from the best. The creative legends of the advertising business have a perceptive understanding of consumers (and how to motivate them). Because they understood consumers, they were able to produce advertising that was so effective that it remained memorable decades after the campaign's end.

In the following sections, I describe some of the gurus of advertising whose work has taught me much of what I know — and can do the same for you.

David Ogilvy

The first book I ever read about the advertising business was *Confessions of an Advertising Man*, by David Ogilvy (recently reissued in paperback by Southbank Publishing). Ogilvy was an inspiration to me — and to thousands of other advertising professionals. He died in 1999 at the age of 88, yet he's a true legend in the advertising world, even though the ads he made famous were created decades ago.

Ogilvy is also famous for succinct statements about how to create compelling, memorable ads. Here are just a few that I try to live by when writing ads for my clients:

- ✔ “On the average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. When you have written your headline, you have spent 80 cents out of your dollar.”
- ✔ “Never write an advertisement you wouldn't want your own family to read. You wouldn't tell lies to your own wife. Don't tell lies to mine.”
- ✔ “Every word in the copy must count.”
- ✔ “We sell or else.”
- ✔ “Advertise what is unique.”

Born in England, David Ogilvy didn't even get into the advertising business until he was 39 years old. He had tried everything from selling stoves door-to-door, to a brief tenure as a chef in Paris. He was even a member of the British Secret Service. Financially broke at the age of 39, he cofounded an advertising agency — Hewitt, Ogilvy, Benson & Mather. And he made a list of five clients he wanted to land: General Foods, Bristol-Myers, Campbell's Soup, Lever Brothers, and Shell Oil. Eleven years later, he had them all.

Ogilvy preached the virtues of sales-driven copy. He also expected advertising copy to be expressed with clarity, relevance, and grace. He knew that the real purpose of advertising is to sell. His ads may have been gorgeous, but they were filled with unique product difference and sell — albeit with an emotional edge. He invented eccentric personalities to capture the reader's attention, based on the idea that memorable faces help make memorable brands.

Ogilvy also said, when talking about creative types who worked for (or wanted to work for) his agency, “Every copywriter should start his career by spending two years in direct response.” What he meant is that the primary purpose of advertising is to sell.

Dot-coms to dot-bombs in one easy lesson

Whenever I think of Bill Bernbach's very insightful quote, "Dullness won't sell your product, but neither will irrelevant brilliance," I'm reminded of the super-expensive commercials for various fledgling dot-com businesses that ran during the Super Bowl broadcast in January 2000. Clearly, most of these businesses had never bothered to read Bill Bernbach, because their commercials simply reeked of "irrelevant brilliance."

And most of the dot-com spots, purchased for as much as \$1.5 million per 30 seconds, were so contrived, so devoid of a selling message (let alone a call to action), and so downright confusing that they wasted most, if not all, of their millions of ad bucks. This misuse of funds is also true of companies in other industries that choose to gamble the entire year's ad budget on the Super Bowl commercials, but the 2000 dot-com debacle was the worst. The majority of these companies didn't survive more than

six months after their spots appeared — other than Pets.com, whose adorable sock-puppet spokesman starred in several Super Bowl commercials (before the company eventually went kaput).

Why weren't these flashy ads successful? Because they not only forgot Bernbach's rule, but they also ignored one of Ogilvy's — namely, "We sell or else." Their spots were so clever that they forgot to include a selling message that actually motivates someone to buy. Sadly, many even forgot to mention what service or product it was that they were selling. And, most important, they forgot to tell viewers why anyone should buy it.

These companies and their agencies got so lost in having a creative, good time on unlimited production budgets that they forgot why they were buying the incredibly expensive time on the most-watched show on television in the first place — they simply forgot to sell us something.

Bill Bernbach

Bill Bernbach was the Creative Director for Doyle, Dane, Bernbach during its heyday. Working with Helmut Krone as Art Director, Bernbach invented a new way to project a message to consumers, by introducing wonderful creativity and a kinder, gentler approach to advertising. The agency led the way with its fanciful Volkswagen ads from the 1960s, which supplied both entertainment and product information. Do you remember "Think small"? It was a huge shift in advertising communication and became the industry standard that lives to this day.

So memorable and trend-setting was that original Volkswagen advertising that when the New Beetle was introduced in the 1990s, the agency for Volkswagen of America, Arnold Communications of Boston, chose not to

create a completely new campaign from the ground up, but rather to emulate the original concept. For example, the campaign for the New Beetle featured lots of *white space* (a Krone innovation that means just what it says — the ad wasn't filled with color and copy from edge to edge), a small photo of the VW New Beetle in profile, and brief copy that read, "Zero to 60? Yes." This kind of advertising is great stuff, and a compliment to the original ads created by Doyle, Dane, Bernbach over 40 years ago. In fact, Arnold Communications, when submitting its work for awards, still lists Krone and Bernbach as creative contributors.

Bill Bernbach, like David Ogilvy, was good for a pithy quote now and then, including the following: "Dullness won't sell your product, but neither will irrelevant brilliance."

Wieden and Kennedy

Dan Wieden and David Kennedy took advertising out of its traditional centers of the ad world (Madison Avenue in New York City, Chicago, and to some extent, Los Angeles) by setting up shop in Portland, Oregon. They're listed on the top 100 people in advertising (for the last century, no less!). They've done great work for Microsoft, ESPN, and many other clients, but they're still probably best known for revolutionizing the sneaker industry — or at least the advertising of it — by creating Nike's "Just do it" campaign.