

## How Do I Create An Effective Advertising Plan?

Developing an effective advertising plan requires that consideration be given to budget, competition, customers, advertising vehicles and consistency.

### Budget

In developing your business plan; be sure to include some expenditure for advertising. For start up or small business owners, think in terms of 3-5% of your total projected annual revenues. If 3-5% is not viable, use 2% or whatever is affordable. The point is: put something in the budget to reach your potential customers. As a comparison, large consumer product companies like Proctor and Gamble spend as much as 25-30% of their revenues on advertising. Think in terms of resource allocation when developing your advertising budget. You might be expending more time than actual pounds in the start-up phase of your business. And keep in mind – whether or not you're advertising to your customers, your competition is.

### Competition

Be very aware of your competitive edge. What is it that your school does differently and better than your competitors? Be sure your competitive edge is highly visible in your advertising approach.

Do a little research on the kinds of advertising your competition is doing. Sometimes your competitive edge can be that you do a better job of advertising. Has your competition purchased display ads in the yellow pages? Design a better ad. Purchase a larger ad. If your competition is leaving flyers on customer's doors, do something else. Choose another way to get information to your customers. Find a way to stand out from the crowd.

### Customers

Identify your perfect customer. Determine who is most likely to choose your school on a continuing basis. If your customers are individuals, give some thought to some key issues that might be important. Consider their age, gender, income level, geographic location and lifestyle issues.

Once you have visualized this individual, then consider - Where are you likely to find them? In what kinds of places do they congregate? What kinds of publications do they read?

### Advertising Vehicles

Choice of advertising vehicles is dependent on the issues discussed earlier: budget, competition and customers. Since most start up businesses have limited advertising budgets, advertising vehicles might include:

## Networking

After determining where your potential customers are likely to congregate, put together a plan to be visible in those places. Join your local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary or professional trade association and attend meetings regularly. Join a committee, volunteer to help on an event or find other ways to be useful and noticeable.

## Publicity

Learn to write great press releases (be sure the information is really “news”, put who, what, where when and why in the first paragraph, and use double spacing), then identify the appropriate writers or editors at local newspapers and magazines and begin relationships with them.

## Print Advertising

Ads in community or specialty newspapers, ads in community publications such as church newsletters can be cost effective. Postcard mailings are relatively inexpensive, sent to the right target list with an appropriately attractive offer. Flyers distributed in targeted neighborhoods or at focused special events can also be very effective.

Whatever advertising vehicles are selected, the key to all effective advertising is consistency. Studies indicate it takes 8 impressions of the same message to reach a customer who has never heard of your school. It takes 3 impressions of the same message to reach an existing customer who knows you and may currently be using your school. The choice of vehicles is important; consistency is critical. Whatever advertising you choose, do it and do it often.