



Advertising and Social Media Today

by Anthony "Bert" Bertino

While marketing and advertising always take a great deal of the budget to perform, utilizing cost effective methods to track what results are returned and what goals are met is vital to the success or failure of these programs. An advertising budget should reflect what customers a property is trying to attract, be it print, outdoor, radio, television, sponsorship, social media or Web-based.

There are many differing marketing channels to utilize, but the costs are so vast and also vary in effectiveness. Choosing a media message and the unique mix of channels is pertinent to reaching the target audience. Many organizations in these economic times have chosen to forgo or at least reduce their advertising expenditures. However, this practice won't reach out to new patrons or remind present clientele (out of site, out of mind).

Print advertising is always important, but how many people really read a newspaper cover to cover, or even actually view a newspaper off-line? There are many problems within the newspaper organizations because readership may continue to be at circulation numbers, but many of the readership can view and read online, therefore bypassing articles and advertisements that do not register with their interests. Magazines tend to be a better target method, as they can concentrate on a specific region, can be targeted to a specific readership and can offer flashier and informative advertising. Magazines also last longer in the hands of the reader, as they tend to hold on until the next issue is purchased or arrives.

Outdoor advertising is paramount in areas where there is greater traffic, it can be read and noticed on a consistent basis, and can be seen for a reasonable distance. That being said, if the targeted audience can consistently be reached by this media outlet, then this may be cost effective for an organization. However, if the target market is passing by at more than 40 miles per hour, the message can be garbled, lost in translation or just purely missed. There have been several outdoor messages that translate quickly, efficiently, and deliver the message to the audience, but they are usually for entertainment, special events or new amenities. Usually the less said in outdoor advertising can come across as more ("Got Milk!" gets the point across, is easy to remember, and delivers the message).

Radio advertising is a great outlet to reach the target audience. It is local, it is direct and it puts a voice to the message. The greater driving concentration of the target audience, the greater radio will work. There are many

varieties of station, therefore the message(s) can be directed to different dynamics of the target audience. This is also where many of radio's problems arise, however. There are so many outlets to choose from, not to mention the rise of satellite radio, which bypasses much advertising, that the message might fall on deaf ears or an insufficient number of potential patrons.

Television advertising is also a great outlet to reach the audience. However, in even greater risk than radio, the message might only reach a small audience. Television has the ability to be recorded with advertising being bypassed, not to mention how many channels are there to choose from. Television targeted to a specific audience and for specific events can be very effective, but the cost must be weighed against the return on this advertising investment. Television advertising will always deliver an audio/visual experience that can be easily understood by the viewer. However, finding the specific channel(s) to distribute that message can be the largest of challenges.

Web-based and social marketing can be extremely effective in reaching the targeted audience, based on cost, availability to everyone with Internet access (be it computer, PDA, cell phone, etc.), not to mention that its footprint is out in cyberspace working twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. A Website functions as a cyber-brochure and should be considered as the prime place to display all that is pertinent to an organization. At one view, a potential client can identify an organization, where it is, what it offers, and what can be gained by visiting the resort over other options. Depending on the specific target audience, a Website should reflect that image, be it glitz and bright, quiet and reserved, young and hip, comfortable and accessible, or any other combination thereof.

Utilizing social media sites, and employing personnel that are diligent and knowledgeable about these sites, will allow a property to reach out quickly, efficiently and cost effectively to the target audience. If concentrating on a 25-40 year-old base clientele, look toward more targeted channels that touch this age group. Therefore, the younger the customer, the more social media and Web-based processes should be utilized.

Sponsorship is a tricky subject in terms of who should receive a property's monetary partnership. While many organizations searching for sponsorships have noble causes, sending the proper message and reaching out to a targeted market must be of paramount concern. Sponsoring a local

sports organization will reach a large group of people, and may include a decent amount of a desired target market, but depending on the amount of underage patrons, may cause a resort more problems than the exposure may be worth. Some casino organizations refuse to advertise in venues where more than 10% of the expected audience might be under casino gaming age. Sponsoring local events will give the desired media exposure, but from a public relations standpoint, the message must be one of local civic pride rather than advertising.

On-site media advertising is extremely important to acquiring and retaining the targeted clientele. Other media combinations are able to deliver the message to the targeted audience, but on-site media must visually appeal to the patron, steer them through the resort facility, and point out as many amenities, events and entertainment interests as possible. On-site media has traditionally been handled by posters on stanchions and on walls, light boxes and brochure handouts, but with the increased audio/visual advances, there are much smarter and easier ways of displaying information

that also are more cost effective in delivering a message. These advances not only inform, but steer the patron to outlets of interests, inform at a glance and allow the patron a greater comfort level.

Advertising has always been the expenditure scrutinized for the greatest result. With greater advances in technology, resorts have more options to reach a target market. The same old way of doing business is not as effective as it was last year, last month, last week or even yesterday. Many resorts depend on reaching their clients through direct mail, and while this is effective in retaining present clients, it does little to acquire new patrons. The casino resorts that establish their message, monitor their response from differing media outlets, and constantly update their media image succeed at a greater rate and bring in a higher percentage of their targeted market. ♣

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