

RETAIL ADVERTISING

Questions and Answers

Q. Everyone knows who we are. Why advertise?

A. Every business has competition. So, even if you're "the only game in town," you're probably competing with direct mail, catalogs and Internet shopping. If your competition is reaching your potential customers and you aren't, you'll lose sales. What's more, studies show that nearly 50% of Americans move every five years. Through advertising, you increase the likelihood of replacing customers lost due to attrition. Plus, people need to be reminded of your business or they may go to someone else who is advertising.

Q. I didn't get any results from my last ad. Why try again?

A. It often takes more than just one ad to create awareness or generate results. Just as you wouldn't expect to go to a weight loss clinic for one week and expect to lose 20 pounds after the first week, you shouldn't expect a single ad to perform similar overnight miracles. It takes time to develop an advertising presence. Keep in mind that you can increase response many ways, from increasing the frequency of the message to trying more exciting offers.

Q. Doesn't newspaper advertising cost too much?

A. When you consider The Birmingham News reach and demographics, it is actually one of the most cost effective methods of advertising available. What's more, since one of the secrets of successful advertising is consistency, not size, frequency can earn you lower rates, even as it increases the effectiveness of your advertising.

Q. I don't have time to advertise.

A. Advertising helps pre-sell your customers so that it actually takes less time to close an individual sale. This actually saves you time you can put to use on other jobs. Since the public is "conditioned" to believe what they read more than just what a salesperson says, newspaper advertising offers you more credibility than a sales person can alone.

Q. There are too many ads in the paper already!

A. There are many stores downtown and in the malls and that is the very reason people shop there for selection. The same is true about advertising. Shoppers look to the newspaper for advertising more than any other medium because there is selection. There are many ads in the newspaper simply because newspaper advertising works! In fact, it is so effective and cost-efficient that more advertising money is spent in newspaper advertising each year than any other medium.

Q. We've already overspent our advertising budget this month.

A. Keep in mind that you are investing money rather than spending it. For example, if \$50 invested on advertising produces \$5,000 in added business, you've just created additional revenue with a relatively small investment. Also, check your newspaper's co-op department to see if you can obtain vendor dollars for a co-op advertising campaign.

Q. The newspaper doesn't reach my market.

A. We have all kinds of ads in the newspaper proving that many different types of people read and respond to newspaper advertising. Different sections of the newspaper reach different markets, and all you need to do is place your ad in the right section of the newspaper to reach your market.

Q. Why advertise in a special section?

A. Special sections can help you reach specific audiences such as teenagers, cooks, gardeners, antique car enthusiasts and others. These sections create a special marketplace for targeted audiences.

Q. How do I know where in the newspaper my ad should run?

A. The real question is where do you place your ad for maximum exposure to your target audience? The Birmingham News already has the answer. We have market research on every one of our sections and products so that we can tell you who reads what. You simply provide an analysis of who your customer is and we'll match it with the proper sections or products.

Q. Can newspaper coverage be too much for me?

A. Many people who do not live in the vicinity of your store drive past every day (to or from work or just visiting, for example). People are willing to drive to get what they want. Your costs will still be extremely economical, even though the paper has a circulation that extends beyond your particular area.

Q. My business is "too new" to advertise.

A. Competition is too fierce to rely on the off chance that customers will drive by and see your signage. Statistics show not only the value - but also the urgency - of advertising when you're new. Over 65% of new businesses go out of business within the first year. It is critical to give your new business every advantage by letting people know who you are and what you have to offer them.

Q. I am in a mall, so I don't need to advertise.

A. While trips to the mall are up compared to 10 years ago, the number of stores visited per trip is down. In addition, the time spent per store and the time spent in the mall per trip have trended down. Therefore, newspapers remain the best way to get shoppers into your store. When people are time pressed, they rely on newspapers to find the products they want and the best prices. Then, when they enter the store they are ready to buy.

Q. I'm a small company. How can I afford to pay for advertising? I can't compete with large corporations' full-page ads.

A. You should view advertising as an investment, not an expense. Even a small company can increase sales through strategic advertising. To give you more bang for your advertising buck, run smaller campaigns that convey your company's unique product or service. Small ads, written clearly and simply and placed strategically, can be every bit as effective as large-space ads.

Q. Isn't the newspaper becoming obsolete? No one reads it anymore.

A. The majority of Birmingham's adults read The Birmingham News everyday. According to Scarborough Research, one daily and one Sunday edition will reach 71% of the adult readers in Birmingham's primary market area. No other advertising medium consistently reaches so many people so often.

Q. I have too much business.

A. Advertising is an investment in the future. You may have too much business today, but how about next month or next year? Your competitors are trying to take business away from you. You must advertise to hold the business you now have. People switch their business from one store to another all the time. Advertise to keep old customers and make new ones. New potential customers are moving into the market all the time. Advertising pre-sells customers, reducing the time needed to make a sale.