

11 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR PRINT ADVERTISING MORE EFFECTIVE

by Peter Baxter, The Business Solution Group

Step 1

Identify what you do better than anyone else. Is it your product or service? Price? Service to customers? Something else?

Step 2

Identify the customers most likely to want what you do best. Think about what motivates them, their tastes, buying habits, budgets, etc. If you don't already know, ask existing customers or others like them.

Step 3

Set a budget. Select publications that will reach your target audience and within your budget provide you multiple exposures over an extended period. Ideally you'll run ads in more than one. Choosing media before designing ads is a good idea. It lets you tailor your ad(s) to each publication and helps you decide whether to do a campaign or a single ad.

Step 4

For each ad, decide how you want customers to respond. Do you want them to buy something? Visit your store? Go to your web site? Remember your name? Setting a goal gives your ad focus and you a way to judge success. Amazingly, people often skip this step. The result: vague, ineffective advertising that can't be measured.

Step 5

Create an offer that rewards customers for doing what you want. Arguably, this step is the most important. It embodies your goal, and is central to both customer appeal and your [profitability](#).

Step 6

Decide what you think customers will find most compelling about your offer. Write a short phrase (the headline) that tells them the most powerful benefit they will get from accepting it.

Step 7

List other less important, but still valuable benefits they can expect. These will be the sub heads and body copy of your ad.

Step 8

Tell them what to do (the "Call to Action") and make it easy. Don't forget to include relevant contact information and answer any questions you think they might have. It's often effective to create a sense of urgency, with deadlines or limited quantities, for example.

Step 9

Follow steps 4-8 to create your ad(s). Keep it simple, with lots of white space. Limit yourself to a few key points related to your headline's theme. Instead of listing features, express each one in terms of how it benefits the customer. Use short, vivid words. If possible, include a graphic or photo illustrating what you offer. Better yet, show a satisfied customer enjoying your product or service. Testimonials are very powerful.

Step 10

Have your ad professionally prepared. This can include copy writing and design as well as preparing artwork for the publication(s) in which you're advertising.

Step 11

Set realistic goals. Evaluate and modify as necessary. While it's important to be consistent, you can—and should—tweak your ad if it's not achieving your purpose.

Step 12

Stick with it. Advertising once or twice is a waste of money. It takes time to establish awareness, which is quickly lost if you stop advertising. Because people generally respond to ads only when they're ready to buy, and not everyone buys at the same time, you'll miss customers who might have bought if they don't see your ad when they're ready. Research proves that the companies that are most well-known get most of the [business](#).

About Peter Baxter

Known widely as "Peter the Publisher," over several decades, Peter has provided professional business communication services around the globe to clients ranging from associations to fortune 500 companies and Mom & Pop operations. He has handled marketing, public relations, event management and sales assignments, and was once part of a team that chartered the Queen Elizabeth II for a one-week ocean voyage in the Mediterranean for 1,500 corporate presidents. His company, The Business Solution Group, provides custom publishing, marketing and advertising services to businesses throughout Florida.