

# HOW TO AVOID COMMON ADVERTISING MISTAKES

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## HOW TO AVOID COMMON ADVERTISING MISTAKES

Advertising isn't hard to do. You prepare an advertisement or write a classified ad to sell your product or generate interest to send people more information. But the way most people make mistakes is either by their inability to write effective ad copy and by sending it to be published in the wrong publication. Here are some pointers to follow:

### Writing Effective Copy

Never try to sell anything costing more than \$5 in a small display ad or a classified ad. First of all, you don't have enough room to tell people everything they need to know to entice them to order.

Instead, you need to employ the "Two-Step" method of advertising. Request the reader to send you \$1 or 4 first-class postage stamps for more information. When they respond, you will send them a brochure, flyer, order form and cover letter so they can place an order for the real product.

Now that pricing is out of the way lets talk about writing your ad copy. The best way to learn how is to read the ads other people have written. Don't copy them word-for-word, but use them as a guide to write your own ads. Once you get the hang of it, you'll be writing effective ad copy just as well as the pros.

**Advertising in the Right Publication.** Although this may sound a little silly and you think it is only common sense to know this \_ people will often overlook this fact when choosing the publication they will be advertising in. Instead, they will look for the lowest price for the amount of circulation they receive. Unfortunately, this does not work out. Even though you need to look for good deals that make it easy on your pocketbook, you will be throwing money away if you don't pre-qualify the publication you choose.

One way of pre-qualifying the publication is to send for a sample copy. Most publishers will send them to you free of charge for the asking. If you don't know of any mail order publications, just write to Glenn Bridgeman, PO Box 10150, Terra Bella CA 93270 or William Lee, Rt 1, Box 10790, Madisonville TN 37354 and ask them to send you some. (Be sure to enclose \$1 or 4 first-class postage stamps in with your request to offset postage costs.) If you tell them you are new to mail order and are interested in publications to advertise in, you certainly will find the \$1 you spent is well worth the effort because both of these publishers are very reputable, honest and helpful.

Study the publication to see what other people are advertising and how they are advertising it. Contact some of the people who sell items similar to your own with the hope of networking with them. You would be surprised how much free publicity you can get just from corresponding, calling and networking

with others.

Once you locate a publication you want to advertise in, give it a try for 3 months. If you don't get any response or only a few orders, try another publication. There are millions of them and eventually you will hit the right target market that will be interested in what you have to sell.

**Don't Stop With One Publication.** Just because you locate the target market of people who are interested in purchasing your product there is no reason you can't advertise in more than one publication. In fact \_ if you don't, your ad will become stale. If the same people continue to see your ad every month they will probably get tired of looking at it. Besides, if they wanted the product they would have ordered it by now. Don't tire them out! Alternate different size ads and get rid of ones that don't work well.

Leave your ad running as long as it brings in orders for you but also advertise in 5, 10, 20 or 50 other publications also to generate a steady stream of orders and to reach more people.

**Key Your Ads.** Many beginners in mail order never key their ads so they know what publication people saw their ads in. In fact, I personally never did this myself and ended up losing a lot of money. So please don't make the same mistake I did. Keying your ads means that you place a code of some sort in your address so that when people write and order something from you, you immediately will know where they saw your ad. Keep a record of every name and address of the publisher you send an advertisement to. Record the date you sent the ad and the date you received a checking copy, proving that your ad appeared. Also record the "code" you used so you can immediately identify where it came from.

If your address is "123 Anytown St," it could become "123 Anytown St, Suite A" for one publication and "Suite B" for another. The postman will still deliver your mail to "123 Anytown St." Of course, if you live in an apartment complex and there are apartment numbers you could turn "111 Johnson Apt A" into "111 Johnson, Apt A-1" for one publication and "Apt A-2" for another. Post office box addresses are also simple. Turn "PO Box 585" into "PO Box 585, Dept A-1" for one publication and "Dept A-2" for another.

People will sometimes even change their name on the ad for keying purposes. You might see the name "Harriet's Recipe Book" instead of Harriet Ranger. Harriet might also use "Harriet's Cookbook" or even "Harriet's Solution to Stress" on her ads relating to these products. Use your own imagination and pretty soon, keying your ads will be a normal part of your life. Be sure and keep track (on your Record Sheet) of how many responses you receive from each publication. After 3 months, look over your Record Sheet and get rid of the publications that didn't do well. You'll go broke if you spend \$10 per month advertising a 2-inch ad if you only receive \$1 back in orders. After awhile you'll be able to see where it pays you to advertise

your particular product and then you can send in larger ads to those publications. Never stop using this method and you'll never stop getting orders in your mailbox. It's a win-win situation for everybody!

Tabloids -vs- Adsheets. Another question about advertising that many people have is whether its better to advertise in tabloids or adsheets. Many people will sell you information on the best day to mail and the best time of the year to advertise. They think they have it down to a science and will convince you of their methods.

However, there is NO set rules that can be employed by everyone. That's because there are a wide variety of ways to approach various products. If you sell travel services and read a report that told you not to advertise during the summer months, you'd go broke. The summer is the travel industry's biggest money-making season!

Don't get hung up on specific statistics made by people who claim to be expert researchers. There is no way to determine what is best for you than to try it yourself and see what works. You are the person in control of your business and you are where the buck stops. Take advantage of your authority and try every angle you can think of until you determine what's best for your company's product and/or service.

Tabloids are a fantastic advertising vehicle and adsheets are too. Sometimes people feel a small 1" camera-ready ad gets lost in a tabloid filled with 100's of them. This may be true in some circumstances and not true in others. Do you look at 1" ads in tabloids? Of course you do. You scan the pages and your eye is always directed to one or two on the page that catches your eye. Ask yourself "why" they caught your eye. Was it because the ad was placed in a specific area on the page? Was it because of the headline or the word "free"?

Classifieds work well in tabloids and adsheets and sometimes they don't, Look in the back of the Globe or Enquirer. Don't they have page after page of classified ads? If nobody was reading them and responding to them, the advertisers wouldn't be submitting advertising to the Globe or Enquirer for them. So evidently, people DO read classified ads \_ even if there are 100's of them. Test the waters and do what works the best for you.