

# Advertising Sales Tips

## IDEAS FOR ASSOCIATION PUBLISHERS

### Strategic Use of Circulation Audit Statements

The audit of circulation is a proven and reliable part of a successful advertising sales program. The audit report is an essential tool used by advertisers to better understand the dynamics of the circulation of your association’s publication and equitably compare it to your competition. All audit statements contain demographic information about the readership. Job titles, geographic location, and other data are part of every audit report. But, when further analyzed, the audit statement is also a strategic tool used to position your publication in a better light when compared to your competitors. Although there are several highly credible providers of audit services, this article will discuss the audit statement provided by BPA. The heart of the strategic use of the audit statement (of both yours and your competitors) lies in paragraph 3b of the statement provided by BPA. This article will discuss how to use the information presented in this paragraph and compare your publication’s statement to those of your competitors.

Paragraph 3b breaks down your qualified readership by the source from where those names came. Readers get on your subscription list in a variety of ways, and some of those ways provide more credibility to the advertising community than do others. Readers who receive your publication by “Direct Request” are

individuals who have specifically asked to receive your magazine as the result of a direct action each person has taken. They have qualified themselves by identifying who they are, their job title and other information and have provided a source document to the publisher containing this information. This is the most highly qualified category of reader

and is usually the most valuable to the advertising community. BPA also allows individuals to receive

your publication because their names have been given to you through a membership roster, industry directory or other document. In this case, the individual did not actively seek to be added to your magazine’s subscription list but is only receiving it because their name is on a list obtained by your circulation manager. Those individuals may not have ever wanted the publication and once receiving it, they may never open it. Associations are at a distinct advantage because they can qualify their readers either by “Direct Request” or as a “Member Benefit.” This is a highly credible source of readers and advertisers place value on the quality of those who were qualified by either of these two methods. Simply put, a reader who is receiving your publication through no direct action of their own is less valuable to the advertiser community than a reader who took an action in order to be on your subscription list.

QUALIFICATION SOURCE	Qualified Within			Qualified Non-Paid	Qualified Paid	Total Qualified	Percent
	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years				
I. Direct Request:		-	-				
II. Request from recipient's company:		-	-				
III. Membership Benefit:		-	-				
IV. Communication from recipient or recipient's company (other than request):		-	-				
V. TOTAL - Sources other than above (listed alphabetically):		-	-				
Association rosters and directories		-	-				
Business directories		-	-				
*Manufacturer's, distributor's, and wholesaler's lists		-	-				
*Other sources:		-	-				
VI. Single Copy Sales:		-	-				
<b>TOTAL QUALIFIED CIRCULATION</b>		-	-				
<b>* See Paragraph 9 PERCENT</b>	<b>100.0</b>	-	-				

*Continued on next page*

## *Audit Statements (continued)*

Paragraph 3b also offers another element of strategic information. BPA rules require that all readers be qualified or requalified no less often than every three years. As a reader's subscription ages, it moves from the "qualified within 1 Year" category into the "2 Year" and then "3 Year" categories. Someone who hasn't been contacted by the publisher in two or three years is of less value to advertisers than someone who is current. In the longer period of time, people change jobs, are reassigned or promoted, or may have left the industry. The goal is to have the highest percentage of your readers qualified in the most recent time period. This is easy for associations because, in effect, you requalify your readers when they renew their annual memberships.

Based on your analysis of your audit statement and those of your competitors you can develop a strategy to compete effectively. If your readers are shown in paragraph 3b as having been qualified by direct request, membership benefit, or request from the recipient's company, your readers are of greater value to advertisers than those qualified by other means. How does your competition qualify their readers? What percentage of those readers is qualified by the higher quality sources? Compare these numbers to the numbers from your audit statement and see if you are delivering a higher percentage of more desirable readers. Next, take a look at the aging of the qualified readers. You should

strive to have a very high percentage of those readers fall into the "qualified within 1 year" column with declining numbers in the other two aging columns. Compare this to your commercial competitors. I have seen commercial magazines have trouble requalifying half their readers every year thereby showing the other half spread across the 2 and 3 year columns. Use the numbers to your advantage by showing that your readership is current whereas the readers of your competitors may not be as fresh.

Association publications are at an advantage in the advertising arena because readers of an association publication receive it as a member benefit and they join their association because they are actively involved in the industry or profession served by that organization. The association advantage delivers to advertisers a high quality readership who views the magazine as a valuable member benefit. Utilizing the data in paragraph 3b of your audit statement and comparing that to the data presented by your competitors can give you a competitive edge. It documents that you deliver enhanced value to your advertisers by delivering a highly qualified and engaged readership. Take advantage of your numbers, compare them to your competition, and use them aggressively. You can be sure your competitors are doing the same.

## **Making the Most of Your Sales Meetings**

**G**ood sales management requires regular communication between the sales staff and those who manage the process. Unfortunately, all too often, people leave sales meetings feeling that it was a waste of their time and that no new or useful information was exchanged. I have attended too many meetings where the discussions centered on, "who have you called, what are your projected sales for this issue/quarter/year, and what are you doing to close?" Perhaps, this information has some value, but it does little to motivate the sales staff

to exceed their goals (and yours).

A sales meeting should be the place where there is a mutual ex-



change of information. Sales people are on the front lines of your industry. They are a key source of intelligence about what is going on with

specific companies, they are the first to see emerging trends, and they hear about how your competition is behaving in the marketplace. All of this information is vital in order for you to steer your products, and the people who represent them, in the direction that keeps them relevant, meaningful, and successful.

Sales people, too, need information from you. Associations in particular, are involved in many activities, some of which may be valuable to the suppliers serving the association's industry or profession. Each of your sales

people should be aware of any new initiatives your association is leading, any new products or services it is launching and any new data or information it has collected. Associations are a great source of information and it is your job to be certain that the members of your sales staff know about and have access to all the knowledge you have. Remember, sales people are not representing your magazine, they are representing your organization and are the face of your association to the leaders of the supplier community.

Plan your sales meetings at a time when the information ex-

changed will do the most good. If you have budgeted for a membership survey, have your meeting at a time when the sales staff can suggest questions to be asked in order to get the data the advertisers are asking from them. If you are planning next year's editorial calendar, let your sales staff contribute suggestions on topics, trends, and story ideas. They may offer a suggestion that your editorial staff would welcome. Before you develop your next media kit, ask the sales staff what it is that is missing from the current one and what should be included in the next one that will give them an

advantage.

In return, your sales people should be a resource to you about what they are hearing about the industry or profession. Are there companies new to the industry? Are there new uses for older technologies that are being offered? Are competing publications introducing new products or services to their advertisers?

Your sales meeting will deliver the most to all who attend it by becoming a source of information, an exchange of ideas, and a discussion of ways all participants can improve their own performance and the performance of the products.

Advertising Sales Experts, Inc. offers several services, each designed to develop and maximize non-dues revenues for associations and professional societies. Our services include: print and web advertising sales, exhibit sales, sponsorship sales, and technologies that support those products including virtual trade shows and video production. Call today to set up a meeting to discuss your organization's revenue producing products and how we can partner with you to maximize the revenue each generates.