

Advertising Sales Tips

IDEAS FOR ASSOCIATION PUBLISHERS

Playing the Data Game

What is it that you are really selling when you sell advertising space? You are selling access to your readers and members. An ad, no matter on what media it is carried, is a message from an industry supplier who is trying to influence the purchasing decisions of the people who see it. In order for this to be most effective, the advertiser must be certain that the people seeing his message are interested in what he is offering and then have the power to influence the purchase of the products and services his company purchases. An advertising message that reaches people who have no interest in buying the product, and which does not generate an inquiry or a sale, is a waste of the advertiser's money. Therefore, your job, as an advertising sales professional, is to prove that the readers your publication and website delivers are the people with whom your advertisers want to do business.

The key to success, then, is to be able to prove that there is a business relationship that exists or can be developed between your readers/members and the companies who purchase your advertising space. Following are some of the things that you can help you make the case that an ad in your magazine or on your website will generate the results your advertising clients expect:

- Conduct a readership survey and develop a statistical model of the buying power of your mem-

bers. Advertisers will want to know where your readers work; what they regularly purchase or recommend as part of their regular job responsibilities; what size budgets they administer or influence; and anything else that helps prospective advertisers understand who your readers are and what they do.



- If your publication is audited, be certain that the job categories you use are truly reflective of the work your members perform. Generic titles, such as “manager”, “director”, “vice president”, etc. don't give any indication of the buying influence those employees have. Try to break it down by specific responsibility areas. Using such titles as “director of purchasing” or “vice president of manufacturing” are far more important to advertisers than the more general terms.

- If possible, budget for an advertising recognition study. This is a third party assessment of how readers perceive and react to an ad in your publication after it is published, and what actions, if any, they take as a result of seeing the ad. Not only will this provide you verifiable data about how the advertising in your publication perform, it can also be used as a sales incentive for the issue of your magazine to be tested.

- Utilize as much data as possible about your industry or profession. By becoming the “industry expert” on the area you serve, advertisers will come to

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you to learn about the size of the overall industry and its economic health. Provide data on the overall market, its national and international scope, trends and developments, economic statistics, and much more. This information can be provided to prospects as a way to help them understand the market potential they can reach through their advertising investment in your product. Your organization's membership and marketing depart-

ments may have the information that you can use to best explain your organization and its products.

Data leads to knowledge, and knowledge leads to action. The more data you can provide to your customers and prospects, the more they will be willing to invest their marketing and advertising dollars in your organization's products.

The Editorial Calendar as a Sales Tool

Of all of the information you make available in your publication's media kit, there is none more important than the annual editorial calendar. This is especially true in the current economic climate where advertising budgets have been reduced. The annual editorial calendar is one of the most important planning tools that advertisers and their advertising agencies use to choose the publications, and in which issues of those publications, they will schedule their ads.

I have heard from many association publishers that it is very difficult for them to create a calendar. "I can't plan more than a few months in advance" and "I want to have the flexibility to put in timely articles" are just two of the excuses I have encountered. But, advertisers don't want to hear those excuses. What they most need to know is which issues will deliver the most value for their advertising investment in them, and the editorial calendar is their best tool to do this.

The annual editorial does not have to be detailed. No one is expecting you to know what the exact wording of the headline of each feature story will be a year before it is published. But what the advertising community does need to know

is the subject areas to be covered in each issue. For instance, if you are selling advertising to software manufacturers, they will look at the editorial calendar to see in which issues there will be a stories about technology. The same is true for all of the major categories of industry suppliers serving your industry.

Another important piece of information that should be included in your calendar is any tie-ins or bonus distribution of issues at industry events, conferences, and conventions. Exhibitors look for bonus distribution opportunities offered around events at which they will be exhibiting and are more likely to advertise in the issues distributed at those events.

As you develop your annual calendar, keep in mind the buying cycle of when specific product categories are purchased by your readers and plan the feature stories within those timeframes. One example comes from the retail industry. The busiest time of year for most retailers is around the holiday months of November and December. But the products that are sold in the retail stores in those months were actually chosen and purchased as much as ten months earlier. If you are planning to write an article on the popular

new items to be purchased as holiday gifts, planning that article in the November issue of your magazine will not be attractive to advertisers. However, planning that same article in the February issue will be much more meaningful to the market and will attract the advertising of those vendors selling merchandise to retailers because their ads will be seen at the time those retailers are making their purchasing decisions.

Your editorial calendar does not have to include every article or editorial department you have planned for each issue, but should include at least one topic per issue that will be of interest to every major category of your industry's suppliers. Also, if you are planning a special issue, such as a buyers guide or "year in review" article, be sure to include those in the calendar as well. Remember, the editorial calendar is looked at by advertisers to help them determine if your magazine covers the most relevant issues of your industry and which issues will contain content that covers the segment of the market they each serve. Without a calendar, advertisers may simply pass you by as an advertising medium.