Adverts With Impact

When you're first creating advertising for your small business, it's very tempting to go for the flashiest, cleverest, artiest adverts. But adverts with impact are those that actually generate customers.

Brand advertising tells you how great the company is, or how old and established they are. Great if you're Coca Cola or BMW, not so good if you don't have those kinds of budgets.

Direct response advertising is designed to create an immediate response or action – a visit, a call, a click. It tells a complete story, with factual, specific reasons why your offering is superior at meetings the needs of your audience. It is salesmanship in print. It overcomes sales objections, it answers all major questions, it promises performance or results, and it backs those promises with warranties or guarantees. This is the only advertising your money should go anywhere near.

•Remember 'AIDA' - Attention Interest Desire Action. The **Attention** part is the banner or headline that makes an impressive benefit promise. **Interest** must relate closely to the way that the reader thinks about the issues concerned. **Desire** relates benefits to the reader so that they will want them. Finally you must prompt an **Action**, which could be to call, click, or visit. Be very clear what action you require.

•Your main message must be the most prominent. Don't be tempted to devote half the space to a striking picture. The biggest part of the advert must be your main benefit statement. This is the part that entices the audience to read on.

•Offer a single impressive benefit, quickly and simply. Research proves that the best adverts are those which offer an impressive, relevant benefit to the reader. This 'promise' should ideally contain the business brand name, take no longer than about 4 - 8 seconds or about eleven to fifteen words, and be clearly the most striking part of the advert. Y**ou must keep it quick, simple and to the point.** Think about the vocabulary and language you use - know your target audience.

•Your message must be quick and easy to absorb. Use a clear layout, clear fonts and clear language. Don't distract the reader from the text with images or fancy fonts. Use simple language, avoid complicated words, and keep enough space around the text to attract attention to it. Use simple traditional serif fonts in ten, eleven or twelve point-size for the main text in magazines and newspapers; smaller or larger are actually more difficult to read and therefore less likely to be read.

•Involve the reader in your writing style. Refer to the audience as 'you' and use the second person ('you', 'your' and 'yours' etc) in the description of what your business does for the customer to get them visualising their own personal involvement. Describe the service as it affects them in a way that they will easily relate to it.

•Develop an offering that is special or unique. Why should people be interested if your proposition is no different to your competition? Emphasise what makes your service special and new. Unless your code of practice prevents you from claiming superiority over your competitors, you should put as much emphasis as you can behind your USP (unique selling point), and either imply or state directly that you are the only company to offer these things.

•Your offer must be credible and believable. The Advertising Standards Authority would prevent you from making overly extravagant claims anyway, but you should make your offer seem perfectly credible. Explaining 'why' and 'how' you are able to do the things you are offering overcomes huge psychological barriers in the prospective buyers mind.

•Use lower case type - word-shapes are lost when capitals are used. People read by recognising word-shapes not individual letters, so don't use capital letters for text, and ideally not for headlines either, as it takes longer to read and reduces impact.

•Headlines should be three-quarters up the page or advert space. Position your headline statement where it can be seen quickest. Do not put headlines at the very top of the space. The eye is naturally drawn to between two-thirds and three-quarters up the page or space, which is where the main benefit statement needs to be.