

NOW With Extra Business Strength!

Giving Your Advertising Some Muscle

WOW!

By Pamela Fish Carlson

Your audience is increasingly fragmented. Their needs are in flux. Consumption habits have been modified. In short, the advertising game has changed. Big time. And the transformation is ongoing.

SO WHAT'S A BUSINESS TO DO?

The options are seemingly endless, and that in itself is one of the greatest challenges in today's marketplace. Advertisers know that getting the right message out to potential customers means finding out just where that message should go. And there are so many more places it could land.

"One of the reasons it has become more fragmented is because the avenues [for advertising] have increased. There was a time when television was it. It ruled," said John Keuning, Creative Director with Out There Advertising.

Back then, the advertising customer who watched television was never knowledgeable about how it all happened, says Keuning.

"They just knew people were on commercials and they wished they were them," he said.

But the Internet has changed all that. The amount of time people are spending online is probably the major driving factor in industry changes in recent years.

It's where people are interfacing with media and it has altered media consumption habits.

Keuning says today's advertisers know they have to cater to the "X's and Y's": The Generation X and the young people who came after them. That population is highly connected through technology – not only as consumers, but also as producers of material going out in all kinds of forms via the World Wide Web.

"The first place to go in order to figure out how to market something is not the product. It's the product the people are trying to reach," said Keuning.

That means advertisers need to go to where people are looking and then be ready to offer up what it is they are looking for.

THE SEO

The very latest efforts at reaching customers involve much more than putting up a Web site. At the University of Minnesota Duluth's Labovitz School of Business and Economics, students are learning a new buzzword: search engine optimization or SEO. Instructor of Marketing John Kratz says SEO is key right now.

"[For consumers,] the decision-making process starts with seeking information," said Kratz. "And that process starts online. Advertisers have to

be very concerned about where they come up in search results."

Kratz says a business might run awareness advertising through traditional media with the goal of driving people to their Web site because that's where they can engage them, capture data and collect a repository of information.

"For a business, the beauty of the Internet is that I can track traffic coming into my site," said Kratz. "Now I can have a more measurable objective; a benchmark that I can measure that's quantifiable. I can look at unique visitors coming to my page, how much time they spend on my page, how many pages did they click through."

Kratz also says that considering all the possibilities with Web analytics, the Web site becomes a really important selling tool. Obviously, how it comes up in search engines is critical.

MORE FAMILIAR GROUND

Still, the information superhighway isn't the only road for advertisers, especially in a local market.

At the Duluth News Tribune, they still do a lot of item and price advertising with things like grocery store inserts. However, much more is being done with company branding and marketing using things like sticky notes attached to the



A Piece of ADvice

Area ad agencies weigh in with what they feel is the single most important piece of advertising advice.



> Jodi Jersett, thriveOn Creative

Know your audience, find a way to touch their hearts with poignancy, humor or need and you'll have created a devoted customer.

> John Hyduke, WestmorelandFlint

Your brand is by far your most valuable asset—it's much more than a logo, tagline or color palette—it encompasses everything you do; make sure your external communications match your internal delivery.

> Steve Greenfield, Greenfield Communications

Don't ever lose sight of the fact that, whether your advertising is clever, sad, funny or hard hitting, its sole purpose is to persuade people to purchase or support what you're advertising.

> Pascha Parks, The JPG Group

Hope is not a strategy. Every successful marketing campaign begins by creating a clear communication plan. You must define your business goals, your target customer and the unique points of difference between you and your competition before you get creative with your marketing efforts.

> Howard Klatzky, H.T. Klatzky & Associates, Inc.

Know your target market, be consistent, don't underestimate the importance of frequency and, of course, hire H.T. Klatzky!

> Bill Nelson, Nelson & Company, Inc.

Know your target customer and your emotional point of difference and communicate it, truthfully.

> John Keuning, Out There Advertising, Inc.

No one remembers boring or wants to come back for more.

> Briana von Elbe, Pearson & von Elbe LLC

Cut through the "everything must go" noise with a powerful, believable message that makes the consumer imagine themselves using your product or service—then deliver what you promise.

> Jay Ott, AdMax Displays, Inc.

If your advertising message isn't being delivered to your target audience when they are ready to buy, it won't be effective.

daily paper and other separate flyers and mailings.

Advertising Director Aaron Becher says the value from a large newspaper operation is that clients have all the company's distribution options when looking at where to place their ads. Print operations have adapted to market demands in other non-traditional ways as well, such as writing news-like features and selling advertising around them.

"The lines between news and advertising certainly are still there and we need to respect that relationship," said Becher. "However, people are looking for content and the content that we can provide is local – and local content is what people in our community need and want."

So the advertising department puts out vendor-related articles in the newspaper called "advertorials."

"Offering the business community a product that includes news and advertising together is a very powerful way to promote products, services, and community events," adds Becher.

PAYBACK

There is a simpler concept that also drives advertisers: The bottom line. Almost anybody in advertising will tell you when the economy is down, so is the budget for advertising.

Both Becher and Keuning say an economic downturn also offers opportunities for advertisers.

"[A slow economy] is really when the market share can be gained or lost by advertising or not advertising," said Becher.

He also feels this is especially true for local advertisers in a smaller market where customers may be looking closer to home for goods and services – and that low economic conditions keep people from traveling out of the area for certain products.

Keuning adds a note of caution for businesses thinking about cutting back on advertising.

"Time-honored research shows that marketers who stayed aggressive during bad economic times came out stronger and healthier and with greater momentum than competitors," said Keuning.

And those competitors, he says, had to spend more on advertising over a longer period of time to get back to where they once were. So how does a local company measure the impact of adding or subtracting ads? Becher says it's pretty simple.

"The best gauge is what makes the cash register ring," he said.

In a market the size of Duluth, the impact of advertising can sometimes be tracked through word of mouth. Simply ask customers, friends and acquaintances if they've seen your ads and what they thought. However, tracking sales should always be done over time to account for things such as a lagging economy and outside market factors.

"Maintain that level of advertising, measure it over time and then you can track your sales, you can see the effect, you can see the return on investment," said Keuning. **D**

Pamela Fish Carlson is a longtime broadcast journalist in Duluth. She works from home as a freelance writer.

SIGNIFICANCE VS. UTILITY


Keuning says that providing successful ad campaigns for businesses means not only knowing what makes the business and its product "tick," but also having a handle on the latest industry trends.

Advertising agencies recognize that things of significance for people – what they see and hear that produces an emotional response – are out there in abundance. Take a quick tour through YouTube.com for proof. Things of utility – the things people need or need to know – are actually dropping off because consumers have so many options for finding information and having their needs met.

So the charge for today's agencies is to take what's relevant and necessary and make it important or significant, according to Keuning.

"How do you make it significant to the people you're trying to talk to? That's the direction agencies have to go," he said.

And Keuning says that's why advertisers need companies like his that have the creative talent and expertise to make a product or service significant to the customer.



First Aid Kit



Roadside Emergency Kit



Business Survival Kit

The climate in the upper midwest can be harsh. Having these handy can be the difference between life and death.



www.outthereadvertising.com


Business Objectives
 +
Strategic Insight
 +
Smart Creative

RESULTS

ADVERTISING + MARKETING + PR + INTERACTIVE
westmorelandflint + flintinteractive
 218.727.1552 + westmorelandflint.com + flintinteractive.com