

## Tips for Evaluating Advertising Media Options

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Selecting the best medium to advertise in has never been more difficult. When there was only one newspaper to choose from you could be guaranteed that your message would be seen by a large portion of the Edmonton population. But those days are gone. Today, Edmonton has 4 daily newspapers, 4 community newspapers, 2 business newspapers, 15 ethnic newspapers, and 54 local magazines to choose from. Now factor in the 13 local radio stations, 5 television stations, billboards, flyers, direct mail, yellow pages and the internet. If this doesn't make your head spin consider this, a single half-page advertisement in the Edmonton Journal costs \$7300 to \$8400. At these prices one cannot afford to make too many mistakes.

Here is a systematic approach to help you evaluate which advertising mediums are best for you. They can be remembered as the 4 M's of advertising: Market, Message, Medium and Money.

**Market Tip 1** - Clearly define and segment your target market.

All markets can be divided into three primary groups, hot prospects, warm prospects and those who are not interested. Hot prospects are those who are actively in the market for what you're selling. Warm prospects include those who are not actively seeking your product but will consider buying it once they have seen your advertisement.

And, there are those who no matter how useful, effective or alluring your product or service is, are just not interested in buying it.

To define your target market (hot and warm prospects) develop a demographic profile. This includes defining variables such as gender, age, occupation, income, ethnicity and level of education. This information will help you identify which communication vehicles are best suited to reach your target market.

It is also important to calculate the size of the market. If the number of hot and warm prospects is quite small and industry competition exists,

the target market may become too segmented and splintered to be profitable. Stats Canada can provide demographic information on a provincial and national level. Economic Development Edmonton is a good source of demographic information for Edmonton and surrounding areas.

**Message Tip 2** - What is it you want to say?

All advertising messages are designed to do one of four things: to create an awareness, shape attitudes, persuade the consumer to act, and to remind or reinforce a particular behavior or perception. The length of copy and amount of

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M & M's

### Newsletter Committee

Dianne Bennett  
Editor

Alfie Lickfold  
Designer

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detail, the need for pictures and color, all impact the advertising medium you choose.

If a picture or diagram is necessary to help convey the message, radio would be an ineffective media choice. If the message requires lots of written detail you wouldn't use a drive-by billboard that is seen for only a few seconds.

**Media Tip 3** - Evaluate the medium's distribution, exposure and advertisement exposure.

The potential effectiveness of various advertising mediums can be determined by estimating media distribution, media exposure and advertisement exposure.

### *Assess Media Distribution*

Media distribution is the roughest measure of an advertising medium's effectiveness. Distribution refers to the number of physical units through which the advertising message can be delivered. With print media, distribution refers to the actual circulation of the publication. With television, distribution refers to the number of television sets turned to particular channel at a particular time.

Distribution statistics are collected by independent advertising measurement bureaus and can be obtained free of charge from most of the larger publication and broadcast companies.

### *Assess Media Exposure*

Media exposure is a more precise measure of a medium's effectiveness in reaching your target market. Media exposure refers to the number of people who are "within sight or sound" of a particular medium. This number may

be larger or smaller than the medium's distribution rate. In some cases newspapers, magazines and other publications are distributed to people who do not read them. This is particularly true with publications which are distributed free of charge. In other instances, a single paper may be read by more than one person.

Media exposure is also affected by the publication's shelf-life. Daily newspapers have a one day shelf-life because they are thrown out as soon as the next day's paper comes. Television and radio advertisements have a very short shelf-life of 30 or 60 seconds. Magazines are often kept four to six months after their release date, thus increasing the likelihood that your advertisement will be seen.

### *Assess Advertisement Message Exposure*

Advertisement exposure is defined as the number of people who are "within sight or sound" of the advertisement itself. A publication or broadcast medium can have great distribution and media exposure and still fail when it comes to communicating the advertising message. For example, what happens when a person bolts to the refrigerator for a snack during a television commercial? Or what happens when someone only scans the headlines in a newspaper? The answer is simple - the advertisement remains unseen.

There are numerous writing and design techniques that will increase the likelihood that your advertisement will be seen. Other important considerations involve where the advertisement is placed within a publication. For example, an advertisement in a

magazine will be seen better if it is placed beside an editorial or story, rather than on a page dedicated solely to advertisements.

**Money Tip 4** - You're better off overspending a little than not spending enough.

Money is what greases the wheels of advertising. It costs money to produce advertising materials and more money to get the advertisements in front of your target audience. Advertising guru David Ogilvy says in advertising, the surest way to overspend is to underspend. This means that there is a critical mass in terms of dollars required to turn advertising from an expense into an investment.

The question, "How much should one spend?" is difficult to answer. The amount allocated to various advertising campaigns will vary depending upon factors such as what the competition is doing, what sales targets have been set and, whether the product is new or old. The point to remember is you are better off over spending a little than not spending enough.

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