

How to Write Ads That Sell

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Writing ads that sell is not easy, but it can be learned. Most business owners use the “Name, Rank, and Serial Number Ad” believing, albeit falsely, that having their name associated with a list of products or services is all that is needed. Countless studies of the advertising effectiveness prove otherwise.

So, how do you write an effective ad? One that draws in readers and appeals to their motivations highlights an offer and calls them to action? Here are some guidelines that will make the process easier for you.

WHAT MAKES YOU DIFFERENT? It seems that there are more competitors cropping up every day. Even if you have a terrific history and a recognizable brand name, that isn't enough to sustain continued growth. Just ask Sears.

What makes you different? What business are you really in? As an example, most garden centers advertise plants, florals, gifts, and lawn ornaments. But what they are really selling is the experience that their customers get from these products and services. Could you easily change the name on your ad to any one of your competitors and see no differentiating factor? If so, you've got trouble.

Imagine your company providing a Disney World-like experience, and your competitors as Joe's Amusement Park. Big difference. Read your ad as if you didn't know your company and ask yourself what would motivate you to call or stop in? Focus on your customers' sensory experience.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME? Your ad's headline should always consider the reader's mental radio station: “WIIFM” - What's In It For Me. By beginning with something important to the reader, they will be drawn to read the rest of the ad.

Ideally, a headline also should use a hook to draw the reader in. Hooks include things like using “You”, “Here's How”, and “7 Reasons Why” in the headline. There are many more. Our garden center might use this headline to accompany a picture of beautiful flowers: “We Have Your Little Piece of Heaven.” You may also want to consider an offer in the ad.

BE EXCELLENT. Don't focus on satisfying your customers: you've got to do better than that. You want raving, loyal fans. Studies have shown that 65%-80% of customers that switched vendors were considered satisfied. They simply felt unappreciated. What do your customers appreciate that makes them choose you again and again? Is it attention to detail, creativity, outrageous customer service, a unique experience, etc? If you don't know, find out.

Also, although most companies are striving to be the “best” choice, it has been shown that customers will not take the time to search for or pay for the “best” when “very good” or even “good” is readily available. So, consider not what makes you the best choice, but the excellent choice and stress it in your ad. Think different. Think Disney.

IT’S ABOUT WHAT, NOT ABOUT WHO. Although name recognition is part of branding, customers are more concerned with what the brand means to them. So, place your company name at the bottom of the ad. The top two-thirds of your ad should focus on your headline and on what you offer that makes you the excellent choice. Focus on what’s in it for the customer to improve the response to your ad.

Paul DeLuca is a Business Coach and Trainer. He works with growing and dynamic businesses to help them reach their goals. To unlock hidden potential in key areas that are critical to your long term success, contact Paul at 440-893-9458 or by e-mail at pauldeluca@action-international.com

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