

Your advertising plan should be a vital part of your marketing plan. You have an excellent service or a useful product and you need to let people know what you have to offer! People learn about your business through advertising. Because successful advertising is creative and innovative, the creative person has a distinct advantage in developing an effective strategy.

Advertising can be expensive, so you must be specific in identifying the objectives of your plan. Each home-based business is unique, but the fundamental objectives for advertising should include creating a public awareness of your business, reaching new customers, increasing sales and profits and being cost effective.

The first step is to define potential customers in the geographic area served by your business. Do some preliminary surveys and some interviews to determine which means of advertising will reach them. What newspapers do they read? Which radio stations do they listen to? Do they use discount coupons? Do they respond to direct mail? Tailor your advertising efforts to your market.

When you know which audience you want to reach and where you want the information to appear, you must look at the various methods of advertising available to you. Advertising methods differ according to medium, complexity, target audience and cost. Some forms of advertising are more effective for a home-based business than others.

1. Newspaper advertising can be effective for a small business. A relatively large number of people can be reached through a classified ad. Display ads are more costly and should be placed in the newspaper section read by your market. The cost of your ad will vary according to the circulation areas and the frequency of publication.

2. Direct mail while initially expensive can be economical in the long run because it delivers specific information in a personal way to large numbers of people. If you operate a mail-order business, direct mail advertising is especially appropriate because you can target your advertising. Direct mail can be used to distribute letters, promotional give-aways, discount coupons and brochures.

3. Brochures can be expensive but they are essential for any business for which the prospective customer needs detailed information about the qualifications and expertise of the owner and the services and products offered. More information can be supplied in a brochure than would be practical for a classified ad. Brochures can be mailed, distributed door to door or given out at community events and trade shows.

4. Yellow Page directories should not be overlooked as a means of advertising. Every person with a telephone has a copy of their local phone book with business Yellow Pages. Directories are one of the most widely used forms of advertising. The telephone company advertising staff will give you help in designing an ad that will present your business in an effective manner. Be aware that directories are published at various times of the year. Call the phone company to determine the publication deadlines. A home-based business may wish to omit the address

from the ad. Phone calls can be screened and clients can be scheduled so the neighborhood is not disrupted by an increased flow of traffic.

5. Business cards are another inexpensive way to inform the public about your business. They are easy to distribute at meetings, upon the completion of a job or during networking. Think of your business card as a "mini-billboard." It should contain the name of your business, the name of a contact person, the complete address, the complete phone number and an appropriate slogan or description of the business.

6. Promotional gimmicks are inexpensive give-aways that attract attention. For example, pens inscribed with your logo, balloons with your business name or t-shirts can be used to promote your product or service.

Jeff Casmer is an internet marketing consultant with career sales over \$25,000,000. His "Top Ranked" Earn Money at Home Directory gives you all the information you need to start and prosper with your own Internet Home Based Business.