

# Reach out and touch customers

by Bruce A. Love

*A*dvertising is a means by which organizations communicate with their customers. As consumers, we are the focus of their advertising efforts as they attempt to persuade us to try products, purchase services, or vote for the candidates they represent. Television commercials, newspaper advertisements, and billboards, are some of the advertising medias used to impact our lives on a daily basis.

*A*dvertising includes all fee-based non-personal selling approaches directed at large audiences. Advertising methods exist in many forms and are usually priced according to the amount of exposure they receive. Advertising medias can be evaluated in terms of reach, frequency, and longevity, although media novelty can also contribute to the effectiveness of the advertisement. No one right advertising approach works best for all occasions.

*T*he Altoona Mirror reaches 100,000 readers daily. Weekly community papers reach far fewer readers. On the basis of "reach," the Mirror can justifiably charge more for advertising space than your community paper. On the other hand, community newspapers may have slightly greater "longevity" (the length of time it sticks around to impress potential customers) because residents typically keep their community papers until upcoming weekly events have come to pass. Local weekly papers may also be more appropriate for highly localized businesses. Newspaper ads are priced by the column-inch. Ads on "break pages" (backs or fronts of sections) are priced higher than ads in the middle of a paper since they are more visible.

*M*agazine advertisements have the greatest longevity of all print media, often remaining in homes for months (in my home, years). Magazines have the added benefit of serving very specific audiences with highly defined interests. If your business serves people sharing these same interests, this may be a method you want to use. Boating supply companies, for example, may consider advertising in [Sailing World](#). Such focused advertising, though usually more expensive than

newspaper advertising, can give businesses in specific industries more bang for their advertising buck.

*"F*requency" refers to how often an intended target is exposed to an advertisement. This term is frequently used to describe the benefits of radio spots, television commercials, and billboards. Commuters are exposed to the same radio commercials and billboards on daily commutes. While the longevity of such advertising is fleeting, the frequency of exposure helps to strengthen the message in the conscious or subconscious minds of potential customers.

*I*f you feel that you can communicate your message best through audiovisual means, but your budget or target market does not justify the high priced, wide-reaching audiences that network television stations reach, consider running more affordable local cable commercials. Web sites can also offer audiovisual display capabilities. Their messages reach worldwide.

*M*any advertising medias have what is called a media kit. Companies thinking about advertising can request this kit from the sales offices of newspapers, radio stations, or your favorite cable company. In addition to pricing information and audience size, some media kits will also describe their audiences demographically in terms of age, gender, and income levels. Psychographic data (information regarding lifestyles, values, hobbies, etc.) may also be available. If so, you may be able to choose a media outlet whose audience profile most closely matches your target audience.

*A*dvertising should be thought of as an investment. Your choice of advertising media is based upon who your target market is, and how much you can afford to spend. Before you spend your entire advertising budget on searchlights, blimps, or inflatable gorillas, assess the value of the advertising in terms of reach, frequency, and longevity. Ultimately, however, your advertising investment will be measured by how many customers purchase from your business as a result of your advertising.

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