

Ten Ways to Waste Your Advertising Investment



1. One and Done. Any advertiser who runs a single ad and waits for results is wasting the money. Advertising works best when it is scheduled with some frequency. Expecting that one ad is enough is like assuming that one tap from a hammer is all a nail takes.

2. Pointless. All successful advertising needs to make a point. If the reader has to work to determine what the point is the ad is wasted. Advertising without a value proposition is frequently wasted. There must be some urgency. There needs to be a call for action.

3. Too pointed. Some advertisers feel that every square inch of an ad must be used. (e.g., 75 things on sale in a two inch ad). Ads like this are like the proverbial bed of nails. There are so many points that not one penetrates the mind. When an ad strives to make a simple single point, it works best.

4. Stopping power. If an ad doesn't stop you, pull the reader in, then, often the ad is wasted. Many advertisers waste ad dollars by investing in personal preferences rather than in their customers' preferences. Much advertising is wasted because an advertiser promotes that which isn't selling and the advertiser wants to move out rather than that which customers want.

5. Goal-less. Any ad that hasn't set a goal is wasted. As Yogi Berra once said, "When you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there." Ads aimed at driving traffic look quite different than ads trying to change opinion or to drive image. Know up front what your strategy is going to be or you will waste dollars.

6. Miss the target. An ad targeting travelers that runs in Tuesday sports may not be as effective as one in the Sunday Travel section. Fish where the fish are by targeting. Do not advertise in areas where your customers don't come from. Track where your opportunities lie.

7. Fickle format. Advertisers who constantly change the look and style of their ads lose the residual cumulative benefit of the ad schedule. Stick with the format long after you are tired of it. Your customers are far more tolerant.

8. Point the finger. Too often when an ad doesn't work the finger is pointed at the media. The old adage applies here. Point a finger at something and usually there are four more pointed back at you. Evaluate every ad to see what you could do better. Many advertisers waste their advertising investment because they buy advertising based on price rather than on the value of the medium. The cheapest ad is not always the most effective

9. Look like you. Advertising must reflect you. Wal-Mart advertising reflects its image and personality and that is a quite different personality than say Nordstrom's. Advertising that makes you look like someone else is wasted. By the way, vanity ads that include the advertiser or the family typically satisfies ego but is a waste.

10. Many advertisers waste their investment in advertising by not completing the communication. Don't forget to communicate your advertising investment with your employees, your sales personnel, your merchandise buyers and even your vendors.