**The Laws of Print Advertising Live On**

It goes without saying that much of the current focus in marketing and advertising has moved to online and mobile markets, but the enduring importance and impact of print advertising — particularly for free and community newspapers —can’t be underestimated. And while the basic laws of print advertising — it should communicate a clear message, be visually appealing, command the reader’s attention and get results — live on, technology continues to raise the bar and create higher expectations for ad content, quality and interactivity.

Today’s consumers are surrounded by advertising on multiple fronts and have grown skilled at avoiding or ignoring ads, particularly on television, smart phones and online. But print advertising is a different story: Newspaper readers look *for* and *at* ads. However, even with an audience hungry for deals, discounts, coupons and the lowdown on local retail offerings, publications need to guide advertisers toward ads that have high impact because they both attract attention and get results.

High-impact print ads share several common features. First and foremost, they generate a strong visual impression through the use of high-quality images and/or photos, distinctive borders, angles and shapes, appealing fonts and layouts that balance content, color and white space. They grab readers’ attention with clear copy that inspires both interest and action.

While advertisers may not be aware of the myriad factors that combine to produce high-impact ads, they generally respond when they see one. That’s why nothing can save free and community newspapers more time and generate more revenue than approaching both prospects and customers armed with high-quality, high-interest, high-impact spec ads.

Whether a print ad runs ROP, as a themed page, insert or in a special section, it needs to stand apart from the crowd if it is going to engage consumers and motivate them to take action. But standing out means more than simply looking good or having an unusual shape. What makes a print ad effective is the synergy between the visual elements and the message. Unless the ad delivers its message clearly and quickly, all of the creativity and effort that went into its design and layout will have been a waste.

In addition to an effective design and a clearly communicated message, high-impact print promotions often contain a “call to action.” Coupons are a common and highly successful example of an advertising element that inspires consumers to act. Similarly, contests and multi-advertiser promotions are extremely effective in engaging both regular and reluctant advertisers.

The bottom line? When ads and promotions emphasize high-quality visuals, distinctive design elements, well-written, engaging content and a clear message, they meet all of the benchmarks for high-impact print advertising that bolsters sales and boosts revenue.

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