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Here's how to make advertising more effective

Spending right on advertising and trade shows is one of the most important but difficult tasks

M MUNEER (HTTPS://WWW.MONEYCONTROL.COM/AUTHOR/M-MUNEER-10391/) | DECEMBER 30, 2020 / 12:49 PM IST

ADVERTISING

Years ago when I was working with the doyens of advertising industry, the Saatchi brothers, we had a favourite saying when clients were reluctant to pay the premium we charged: "If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys." This is true in all types of advertising but more so among companies in the B2B industry targeting other businesses for their products and services. B2B advertising is more often than not resembles government and PSU advertising. Small investments are only allowed in photography, shoots and creative work, resulting in poor quality brochures and ad campaigns.

To know what this means, please randomly check any trade publication or brochures for motors, abrasives or other industrial products. Dull photos of machinery or products which would have been done by an amateur photographer or the manager on the factory floor, haphazard layout, long

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list of boring product description in engineer language, no attempt to make the prospect call the company, and no clue on brand building for the company. I guess these companies are doing such advertising to cut the cost of making the ads. It could even be an in-house attempt too.

As any expert on advertising will tell you, no good results will come from advertising by squeezing production budgets to the lowest possible level. The idea of those executives who squeeze the budgets might be this: "The main costs must be to reach out to our target customers and not for making the ad." Unfortunately, the problem with the B2B marketers is that they think more and more of TQM, and think that quality improvement programme requires driving costs down at all levels. The advertising costs should be driven down definitely as what does it bring to the company, right? Optimisation is something they have not learnt much about!



How can this mindset be changed? Most business owners do not know a good advertisement expense from a bad one. They have no idea if Rs 100,000 for an illustration that shows the inner workings of their product is worth the money. They do not have a clue as to how spending Rs 15 lakhs for a trade show promotion could be reasonable and proper. The only solution to this problem is hands-on experience. Once they have been to a trade show where their archival is the talk of the event when their own stall is stale and old, they will appreciate the importance of spending right.

To be effective with advertising in the current situation in India requires a lot of thought. You need to put yourself in the customers' shoes, and try to decide what appeals to your prospects, to be most effective. It is important to think about the customer's buying process, and about getting your brand to the next phase of that process. Most experts go through several possible concepts to get a handful that might do the job. It is amusing to see some of these clients spending hours ideating creative thoughts. While it is good to brainstorm, the creative part is best left to the creative folks rather than the business folks. As a business head, you must give your brief as to what are key to your customers. The communication angle is the job of that professional. If you start giving ideas on that it would colour their thinking and you may miss out on some golden ideas.

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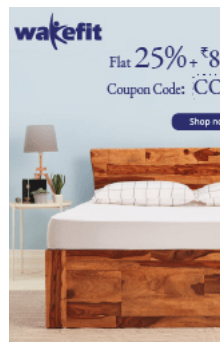


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A good idea most often will takes a lot of time unless people keep thinking about the problem in the back of their minds. One will go through many bad ideas before zeroing in on the right one. You can't cut corners on this process, and you have to use talented, experienced people who are capable of finding the right concepts from several rational thoughts.

Let me give you one more suggestion for getting the best value from your advertising. Ask your creative team what they would like to spend. Do not think this is a bad idea. It is like this: Think of your plans to buy a new apartment. When you go shopping for it, the first question brokers ask is, "How much do you want to invest?" They do not want to waste everybody's time showing all possible combinations of apartments across the large metropolis. Why show you a Rs 10 crore apartment when your budget is only Rs 2 crore?



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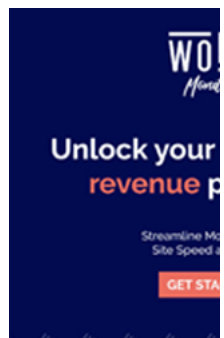
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Advertising works the same way. Agencies deliver effective work when they know upfront what the client budgets are like. Normally the clients have no idea how much is necessary, and they are usually too embarrassed to admit it. They normally say something like, "We're open to your recommendation; we want great work" which doesn't mean the sky is the limit. It probably means "Be gentle, we're new at this." But it is okay to say you don't know, just don't leave it there. Keep talking until you arrive at a target budget that is acceptable. And agencies should give some examples of similar work by other companies to help clients decide on the budget.

Spending right on advertising and trade shows is one of the most important but difficult tasks. And the risk of spending too little is just as great as the risk of spending too much. But the idea is to be effective irrespective of your budgets.

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M MUNEEER is the managing director of CustomerLab Solutions, an innovative consulting firm delivering measureable results to clients.

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