



Causes of Advertising Failure

1. The desire for instant gratification

The ad which creates sufficient urgency to cause people to respond immediately is also the ad most likely to be forgotten immediately following the "expiration" of the offer. Such ads are of little use in establishing an identity for the advertiser in the mind of the consumer.

2. Attempting to reach more people than the budget will allow

For a "media mix" to be effective, each element in the mix must have sufficient repetition to establish "retention" in the mind of the prospect. Too often, however, the result of a media mix is too much reach, not enough frequency. Will you reach 100% of the people and convince them 10% of the way? Or will you reach 10% of the people and convince them 100% of the way? The cost is the same.

3. Assuming the business owner knows best

The business owner is uniquely unqualified to see his company or his product objectively. He is on the inside, looking out, trying to describe himself to a person on the outside looking in. It's hard to read the label when you're inside the bottle. Too much product knowledge causes the business owner to answer questions that no one is asking. This makes for extremely ineffective advertising.

4. Unsubstantiated claims such as, "Highest quality at the lowest price"

Advertisers will often claim to have what the customer wants, but fail to offer any evidence. A cliché is nothing less than an unsubstantiated claim to the public is tired of hearing. You must prove what you say in every ad. The prospect will not make a new decision about your product until you have given him new information and a new perspective. Do your ads supply new information? Do they provide a new perspective? If not, prepare to be disappointed with the results.

5. Improper use of passive media

Non-intrusive media, such as newspaper and yellow pages, require the use of a reticular activator (such as a photo or illustration) because passive media tends to reach only those buyers who are actively in the market for the product. Passive media is very poor at reaching prospects prior to their need, which means it is extremely difficult for passive media to create a predisposition toward your company. With patience, the consistent use of intrusive media (such as radio and television) will win the heart of the customer before he is in the market for the product.

6. Creating ads instead of campaigns

It is foolish to believe a single ad can ever tell the entire story. The most effective, persuasive and memorable ads are those most like a rhinoceros. They will each make a single point very powerfully. An advertiser with seventeen different things to say should commit to a campaign of at least seventeen different ads, with each ad being given sufficient repetition to accomplish retention in the mind of the prospect.

7. Obedience to unwritten rules

For some insane reason, advertisers want their ads to look and sound like ads. Why is this?

8. Late week schedules

Advertisers justify their unreasonable focus on Thursday and Friday advertising with the statement, "We need to reach the customer just before he goes shopping." Why do these advertisers choose to compete for the prospect's attention each Thursday and Friday when they can have a nice, quiet chat all alone with the prospect each Sunday, Monday and Tuesday?

9. Overconfidence in qualitative targeting

The importance of qualitative data has been grossly overestimated by many advertisers and media professionals. In reality, Saying The Wrong Thing has killed far more ad campaigns than Reaching The Wrong People. It is amazing how many people become "the right people," when you are saying the right thing.

10. Event driven marketing

A special event should be judged only by it's ability to help you more clearly define your market position and substantiate your claims. If one percent of the people who hear your ad for a special event actually choose to come, you will be in desperate need of a traffic cop and a bus to shuttle people from remote parking lots. Yet your real investment will be in the 99% who did not come to the event! What did your ad say to them?

11. Great production without great copy

Too many ads today are creative without being persuasive. "Slick, clever, funny, creative, and different," are poor substitutes for, "informative, believable, memorable and persuasive."

12. Confusing "response" with "results"

The goal of advertising is to create a clear awareness of your company and its Unique Selling Proposition. Unfortunately, most advertisers evaluate their ads by the comments they hear from the people around them. The slickest, clearest, funniest, most creative and most different ads are the ones most likely to generate these comments. See the problem? When we confuse "response" with "results" we create "attention getting ads" which say absolutely nothing.

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