

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ADVERTISING

Advertising has been called the lifeblood of business. Well it's certainly the lifeblood of the publishing business, with most national and local publications depending not on the cover price but on advertising revenue for their income.

However, while all those ads might help the publications running them make a healthy profit, many of them fail to have the same effect for the businesses placing them. The fact is that many ads actually cost more to place than they ever generate in business – and that can even include those big full page/full colour ads produced at great expense by professional advertising agencies for big name companies. That's because many businesses – especially small businesses - simply don't know how to advertise effectively.

Many small businesses simply copy all the mistakes they see in their competitors' and other ads, or ask the people they book the ad with for advice, thinking they must know about advertising because they work in the publication's advertising department. That's a bit like thinking a hospital cleaner must know about heart surgery because they work in the cardiology department. The reality is that the only aspect of advertising the people who work in publications' advertising departments are expert on is selling advertising space.

As for big businesses, well many of them simply hand over a huge amount of money to some big city advertising agency and leave them to it. In return they'll often get a highly expensive campaign that gives the impression that it's more concerned with letting the advertising agency show how clever and creative it is than with generating business for the client.

The key point that so many people fail to appreciate is that the real purpose of advertising is not to simply let people know about your business - it's to get them to pay money to your business for your products or services.

Furthermore, for advertising to be truly effective, it has to generate far more in business revenue than it costs, and this is especially true for new or small businesses that can't afford to spend vast sums on ads that are commercial failures. When it's your own money you're spending, every penny counts.

What you therefore need to know is how to advertise your business in a way that will bring in the maximum amount of business for the minimum amount of advertising spend – and that's exactly what this book is going to tell you.

# PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL ADVERTISING

The overriding principle of successful advertising is that ads should generate more in profit than they cost to place, and naturally the wider the gap between profit and cost the better.

You achieve this partly by coming up with the right ads (which is covered in the next chapter) and partly by making sure you place your ads in the right place at the lowest possible price, which is the subject of this chapter.

Whether you advertise in local or national publications depends on your business and what you do. If you're purely a local business such as a builder or shopkeeper, there's obviously no point in advertising in national publications because few of the readership are ever going to be customers of yours anyway. If, on the other hand, you're either producing or dealing in something that can be sold nationally (or internationally) then naturally you need to deal on a national (or international) level.

The first step to placing ads therefore is to identify suitable publications to place them in, and the first step to doing that is to draw up a profile of your likely customers – who are they, what do they want and what are they likely to read? This is known as targeted advertising.

As a rule you should avoid advertising in 'general interest' publications such as newspapers because their readership is just too diverse to enable you to target your advertising effectively. The exception to this is for local businesses such as builders and shops advertising in local newspapers, in which case your customer base can be as diverse as the paper's readership but will share the common factor of being *local*.

When it comes to advertising in *national* publications the key to success is to advertise in publications that target the same specific market that you cater to. Might sound obvious, but some people have tried things like advertising computer gadgets in fishing magazines believing that having the only computer ad will mean they'll get lots of business because they'll have no competition. It doesn't work. So if your business deals in mail order car parts, stick to running your ads in car magazines.

However, often you can target your market rather more accurately than that, so if you were selling parts for older cars, you'd place your ads in magazines specifically devoted to older cars. And sometimes you can target your advertising even more accurately than that, so for example if you were selling parts for a very popular old car such as a Mini or a Mustang, you'd be able to advertise in a magazine devoted purely to that car. But that's still not the end of it, because anything that's popular tends to have a club, and clubs tend to have their own members' magazines or newsletters, which by their nature have a highly targeted and enthusiastic readership. Their advertising rates are often relatively low too.

What it boils down to is that the more accurately you can target your market, the more successful (and cost effective) your advertising will be.

As far as finding publications to advertise in goes, your local papers you probably already know or can easily find out about with a quick trip to your local newsagent. Major newsagents can also carry a large number of national and international publications, though these are actually just a

fraction of the total number published, with many trade and special interest publications only being available by subscription or special order.

Fortunately there are a number of media directories such as *British Rate and Data* (BRAD) and *Willings Press Guide* in the UK and *Oxbridge Directory of Magazines and Newsletters* in the USA which provide listings and details for just about every significant commercial publication available. The cost of these can run into the hundreds, but the good news is that you don't have to buy one as you should be able to find one in (or obtain one through) your local main library.

Chances are you'll find more than one suitable publication to advertise in, so which one do you go for? The one with the lowest cost per readership ratio, based on the publications' advertising rates and circulation as published in the directories or obtained from the publisher. Please note that you should always use circulation figures rather than readership figures for this, and that independently verified figures are preferable to publishers' own.

Say you found two equally suitable publications with identical advertising rates but one has twice the circulation of the other, that means it will enable you to reach twice the number of potential customers for the same cost, so naturally that's the one to go for. Or if one charges twice the advertising rates but only has one and a half times the circulation, then that's obviously NOT the one to choose. You should always be aiming to reach the maximum number of potential customers for the minimum amount of money.

Having identified suitable publication/s to advertise in, the next step is to contact them to get a copy of their advertising rate card, and while you're at it ask for a sample copy of the publication too, as most publishers will send one free to potential advertisers.

The rate card will tell you the publication's normal rate for advertising space, usually quoted in single column centimetres (scc) for small display ads, the sizes of these being measured as the number of columns the ad runs across for its width times the height of the ad in centimetres. (You might find some publications working in column inches, but the same principle applies.) So an ad that ran across two columns and was five centimetres high would work out as 10 scc and be priced accordingly.

However, ***you don't have to pay rate card prices***. That's because publications frequently struggle to fill their allotted advertising space, which explains all the ads you see saying things like "You've just proved that advertising works. To promote your business to 50,000 readers in this space call ...." What this means is that they couldn't sell the space so they had to put their own ad in to fill it. If you see this sort of ad running regularly in a publication then you know that they regularly have unsold advertising space.

Not surprisingly, publications would much rather sell space cheaply than not sell it at all, and you can take advantage of that fact to get yourself a better deal in one of two ways. The first way is to decide how much you can afford to pay for an ad, work out how big an ad that would normally get you in your chosen publication and then arrange to get an ad TWICE that size. You do that simply by sending both your ad and payment check to the publication along with a letter telling them to run it when they have "remainder space" available.

Of course you don't know when your ad will be run if you do this, nor will you have any say over where in the publication your ad will go. If you definitely must run it in a certain issue or in a

certain place (some are better than others, which we'll come to later) then you might have no option but to pay full price, though it's always worth trying to negotiate a lower price, especially if you know their deadline is approaching.

The second way will present itself once you've run an ad in a publication, or maybe even if you've just requested the rate card. In this case the advertising department will phone you up asking if you want to place an ad and offering discount prices. That's because they're desperate to fill that advertising space, and the nearer to their printing deadline they get, the more desperate they become, so bear this in mind and you can try naming your own price. They might not go for it at first, but let them know you're interested if the price is right and there's always the chance they'll phone you back later offering an even bigger discount, which can be 25% of rate card price or even less.

HOWEVER, under no circumstances let a publication push you into running an ad you don't really want to run unless they offer to run it for free – which doesn't happen often. The important thing is to only run ads when you really want to and to only pay what you really want to. Give those nice people from the advertising sales department half a chance and they'll have you spending your entire advertising budget in no time, so only run ads when it suits you, not when it suits them.

That also means not taking up the salesperson's kind offer of a 25% discount if you book three ads instead of just one. Often the person trying to sell you the ad will tell you that people need to see your ad several times in order to get to know your business before they'll respond. I've even seen the same claim in some 'business opportunity' manuals. It's garbage. The truth is, if an ad is going to work, it'll work the first time it's run. In fact fortunes have literally been built on the basis of one successful ad, while plenty more money has also been wasted on runs of unsuccessful ads. Therefore the only time to go for block booking is when you've tested your ad and proved that it works.

Whilst on the subject of people phoning up trying to sell you advertising space it's worth mentioning that some of the people who do this are con artists who work through business directories, Yellow Pages etc. trying to get businesses to pay for ads in publications that don't actually exist. As previously mentioned, any genuine company should be happy to send you its rate card and a copy of their publication and circulation details. Needless to say, paying for an ad in a publication that doesn't exist isn't going to do your business any good, so NEVER pay for an ad in a publication you haven't seen or heard of unless it's a new title from a known company. And only then when it's right for you.

Returning now to the subject of block booking and successful ads, apart from exceptional circumstances, such as an alien invasion or similar earth-shaking event, there are only three reasons why an ad will fail. First, it's a bad ad, which, after reading this book shouldn't apply to any of your ads. Second, it's in the wrong place, which is a mistake you'll also know how to avoid. Third, there's simply no market for your product or service – and if that's the case then running the ad three times or even three hundred still won't make it work.

That's why you should always place your first ad as a one-off in just one publication. If it's successful, great, you know you're onto a winner so run it again and then again and then as your income increases start running it in other suitable publications too, which should bring in even

more business. That's the formula that has enabled several people to build a fortune starting with just one ad. And if your one-off ad is a total failure then at least you've minimised your losses.

Something else you can do to minimise – or even prevent – losses is a quick break-even calculation for any ad you're looking at placing. As a rule of thumb for small businesses, if you have to make more than five average sales to cover the cost of an ad then it's not worth placing it.

Always remember though that even when you have got a successful ad that doesn't mean you couldn't have a more successful one. Successful long-term advertisers will regularly try out different ads and different publications, sticking with anything that produces improved results and dumping anything that doesn't.

And it's not just which publication you place your ad in that can affect its success but which *part* of the publication. Ads generally do better when placed in the top half of a right hand page simply because that's where most people first glance when turning the page. Experience also shows that small ads in the general run of magazines (as opposed to specific placing as covered below) generally do better when placed in the back half of the magazine.

When it comes to 'large' small ads (eighth page etc.) you can also get better results in newspapers by having your ad on an editorial page rather than on a classifieds page because, as mentioned earlier, people tend to buy papers for the editorial content not the ads, so that way they're more likely to see it as they read through. There'll also be fewer other ads competing for their attention too.

Regarding running your ad among editorial in magazines, that tends to depend on which country the magazine is published in. In the UK for example, magazines don't tend to run ads on editorial pages (though they will run ads pages next to editorial ones) whereas in the USA magazines will run advertising and editorial side by side on the same page.

If you can run your ad among the editorial in a magazine (either on the same page or on an ad page adjacent to an editorial one) then if possible you should try and get it run among some editorial that relates to what your business deals with. That's because if the editorial has been of interest to the reader there's a good chance your business could be too, so by having your ad right next to the editorial there's the greatest chance of the reader seeing it and responding to it. Expect to have to pay more to specify your ad's position in this way (at least full rate card price) but it can be well worth it.

Something else that can be well worth it, especially to try and get maximum response from your first ad, is running your ad in a 'themed' or 'seasonal' issue that fits in with what your business provides. Seasonal things like holidays etc. are obvious, and you can find out about special themed issues by contacting the publication concerned to ask if they have any scheduled. In fact if you've ever advertised with them or applied for their rate card, then if there's a suitable themed issue coming up, chances are they'll contact you.

If targeting specific issues always bear in mind lead times (the period between the deadline for ad bookings and the issue being published). For daily and weekly publications this can be just a few days, but for monthly publications it can be two months, so always check the lead times of any publication you're intending to use and book your ad in good time.

When it comes to the placement of ‘small’ small ads, you might have no option but to run these in the classifieds section in among all the others. In such a case make sure your ad is run in the appropriate section for your particular business if the publication has one because that’s obviously where your potential customers are most likely to look when they want something.

But wherever your ad ends up being run, for your advertising to work effectively you need to have a good ad that will grab peoples’ attention – and that’s the subject of the next chapter.

# HOW TO CREATE WINNING ADS

The majority of classified ads in any local paper (and most national magazines) are clearly the work of people who know nothing about effective advertising and which tend to perpetuate the same basic errors.

The most common of these is to have the name of the company in big letters at the top of the ad. Seeing your company's name large in print like that might swell your ego, but it'll do nothing to swell your bank account, because the simple fact is that nobody apart from you gives a damn about your company, its name or its history. All people do give a damn about is themselves and their family (and/or business) – so what your ad has to do is tell them what your product/business can do to make life better for them.

Furthermore, apart from those publications consisting entirely of ads, people do not tend to buy newspapers and magazines for the ads but for the editorial content. Consequently the chances are they'll only see your ad in passing – so your ad has to be able to catch their eye at a glance and then make them want to know more.

Take a look at the two ads below and imagine seeing them on a crowded newspaper page - which one would be most likely to get your custom?

**U R BROKE & Co**  
Est. 1975  
Debt management experts.  
Helping local people to cope with  
debt for over 25 years.  
Tel. 001928 37465

**REDUCE YOUR  
DEBTS INSTANTLY!**  
One phone call to us can consolidate all your  
outstanding debts into one within 24 hours  
and significantly reduce your monthly  
payments. Apply before April 1<sup>st</sup> and we'll  
even pay 5% of your total debt off for you.  
U R BROKE & Co. 001928 37465

I'll bet it's the one on the right – especially if you have debts! The reason for this is down to one of the two keystones of successful advertising – A.I.D.A. which stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. Let's deal with that in more detail.

**ATTENTION.** The first thing your ad needs to do is attract people's attention. Research shows that around 80% of the pull of any ad is in the headline, though in small ads where you can't generally use photos of overpaid celebrities or scantily clad models to catch people's eyes the headline assumes an even greater importance.

**INTEREST.** Having grabbed their attention, the next thing your ad needs to do is keep them interested enough to read your ad all the way through.

**DESIRE.** In the course of telling them what you offer, you have to make them want it, to desire it, to make them feel it'll make them much happier/healthier/richer/more attractive.

**ACTION.** But making them desire it isn't enough – you've got to make them buy it! Make them a special offer, come right out and ask for their money even, but do something to make them get on that phone or send off that SAE or order form.

I think you'll agree that the left-hand example above would be unlikely to grab your attention, while even if it did there's nothing in it to get interested or excited about or to make you want to get on the phone. And yet there are countless small ads like this. In contrast, the headline of the right-hand example is highly likely to grab the attention of anyone with debts, while the body copy telling how they can reduce their debts both maintains the interest and creates the desire, with the April 1<sup>st</sup> deadline being a spur to act quickly.

Now let's look at a slightly larger example to see how the four elements can be broken down into distinct sections.

<p><b>LOSE 25lb IN ONE WEEK!</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Complete weight loss program in a can.</b></p> <hr/> <p>Now you don't have to spend months on tasteless diets or put yourself through hell down at the gym to get slim.          New scientifically proven Kwik-E-Slim makes losing weight quick and easy.          Just drink one can of Kwik-E-Slim a day and see the weight virtually fall off!          For free brochure giving full details plus 25% off your first order send large SAE to Lo Phat Industries, La Darse Street, Lower Wayton.</p>	<p>← <b>ATTENTION.</b> Headline guaranteed to grab the attention of anyone wanting to lose weight.</p> <p>← <b>INTEREST.</b> Sub-heading instantly makes it sound like an easy option – and most people prefer those.</p> <p>← <b>DESIRE.</b> Body copy says this product is the answer to any slimmer's prayers and better than all that other stuff.</p> <p>← <b>ACTION.</b> No deadline to spur people into action quickly, but the lure of FREE information and a money saving offer.</p>
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Besides a good headline there are other methods you can employ to help your ad grab people's attention, including the position of your ad in the publication, the look of your ad and the use of colour. The best places to position your ad we covered in the previous chapter, which brings us to the look and the use of colour.

Starting with the look of your ad, you should always have a border around it as on the above examples because this helps to visually isolate your ad from all the others on the page and focus the reader's attention on all those words telling them why they should be dealing with you. Let's compare what one of the previous examples looks like both with and without a border. Again, imagine seeing both of these ads in the midst of a sea of print on a crowded newspaper page – which would have the most impact and be easiest to read?

<p><b>REDUCE YOUR DEBTS INSTANTLY!</b></p> <p>One phone call to us can consolidate all your outstanding debts into one within 24 hours and significantly reduce your monthly payments. Apply before April 1<sup>st</sup> and we'll even pay 5% of your total debt off for you.          U R BROKE &amp; Co. 001928 37465</p>	<p>In newspapers print is done not in lines right across the page as in this book but in columns.          In newspapers print is done not in lines right across the page as in this book but in columns.</p>	<p><b>REDUCE YOUR DEBTS INSTANTLY!</b></p> <p>One phone call to us can consolidate all your outstanding debts into one within 24 hours and significantly reduce your monthly payments. Apply before April 1<sup>st</sup> and we'll even pay 5% of your total debt off for you.          U R BROKE &amp; Co. 001928 37465</p>
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These days, computers with word processing or desktop publishing packages make it really easy for small businessmen to take control of how they want their ads to look in a way that just wasn't possible in the past. No longer do you have to rely on the whims of some graphic designer or try to sketch out what you want. Now you can play around with the look of your ad on screen, compare different ideas and then present the publication you want to advertise in with a correctly scaled printed copy showing exactly what you want to run.

When designing your ad, remember that making it easy to read basically comes down to keeping it simple and not trying to cram so much into such a small space that the text ends up so tiny that you need a microscope to read it. Also remember that small text is easier to read on the printed page than it is on a computer screen, so if your ad is going to use small print try composing in on screen at say 150% to make it easier to work on and then print it off actual size to check how it would actually look on the printed page.

Graphics and/or photos can help to make your ad look nice, but in advertising the old saying that one picture is worth a thousand words isn't necessarily true. If you have a product that sells largely on visual appeal then obviously it makes sense to show it. However, in most cases with small ads it's your headline and body copy that will pull in the business. Take another look at the 'Lose 25lb in one week' example. Would a 'pack shot' of the product add anything to that ad? No. So as a general rule, if you're pushed for space, words should take precedence over any images that aren't going to actively encourage people to buy from you.

Another aspect that not only concerns making your ads easy to read but can also affect how people will perceive your business as a result of reading them is the font, typeface or style of lettering you use. There's a wide range of different styles ranging from the plain to the ornate, some of which allow you to fit more easily readable words into the same space and some of which suit some businesses better than others. Compare the two following paragraphs:

Fonts come in two types, namely serif and sans serif. With serif fonts the letters have small 'tails' at their ends which is generally regarded as helping to lead the reader's eye to the following word, whereas the letters in sans serif fonts have plain ends.

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Exactly the same words in each paragraph but notice how the top version in 12 point Courier takes up more space than the bottom version in 12 point Ariel. And the same paragraph printed in 12 point Times New Roman as used for the bulk of this book would have taken up less space still. So always remember that if you're struggling for space you might be better off looking for a more compact font than simply dropping to a smaller, more difficult to read point size.

Notice too that both Courier and Times New Roman are established fonts that look serious and business-like. Ariel looks slightly less serious but still professional. And all are very easy to read.

**By contrast, this sentence in 12 point Vivian looks anything but serious or professional and is not so easy to read.**

So play it safe and always stick to plain easy to read fonts – at least for your body copy. You can get a bit more ‘arty’ for headlines, but again make sure it’s easy to read – and that the style of font is appropriate for your type of business.

In other words, if your business offers what’s regarded as serious products or services such as legal or financial, then if you want to be taken seriously you should stick to using ‘serious’ fonts. So you’d have something like:

## **REDUCE YOUR DEBTS INSTANTLY!**

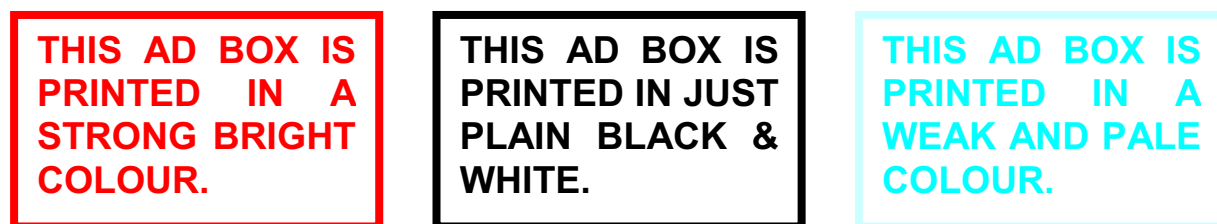
And definitely not something frivolous like:

## **REDUGE YOUR DEBTS INSTANTLY!**

If, on the other hand, your business caters for the fun/entertainment market then it would be OK to have your headline in a ‘fancy’ font – but not so fancy that it’s hard to read. Also bear in mind that your chosen publications might not even be able to offer the font if it’s too fancy or obscure. If in doubt, play safe and keep it plain and simple.

The last thing to mention about fonts is - don’t use lots of different ones. Using a different font for the headline to the one you use for the body copy is fine, especially if it helps to make the headline bolder and more noticeable, but if you use too many different fonts in the same ad it’ll just end up looking a mess.

In some publications you’ll be able to run your ad with colour. I’m not talking full colour here, which tends to be very expensive and only worth it for ads with photographs, but spot colour. This can be a very useful cost-effective way of making your ad stand out – but only if you use the colour/s on offer correctly. To see what I mean take a look at the boxes below.



Chances are you find the red box the most noticeable, then the black one, then the pale blue one. In other words, strong bright colours are more eye-catching than black, but black is more eye-catching than weak pale colours. So had you been offered the chance to use pale blue you could actually have ended up paying more to make your ad LESS effective.

However, it is possible to make your ad stand out using pale/weak colours as you can see from the two examples below.

**THIS IS A SMALL AD**  
It consists purely of clear black text on a plain white background.

**THIS IS A SMALL AD**  
It consists purely of clear black text on a plain pale blue background

As we've seen, had the text and border in the right hand example been printed in pale blue the ad wouldn't have been very noticeable. But using a pale/weak colour in a block as the background can really make an ad stand out from the white of the page, especially if it's the only block of colour on that page.

So the rule is, if you can use a strong bright colour, especially red, use it for your headline and border (small text in the body copy is still better in black) but if only a pale/weak colour such as light blue or yellow is on offer, use it as a background.

Of course often the only choice you have is black ink. In that case you can still add more visual impact to your ad by using 'reverse block' which is where instead of having black letters on a white background you have white letters on a black background. However, you should only use this for the relatively large print on your headline and not for the small print of your body copy because that'll make your ad harder to read as you can see from the examples below (which you'll need to see in print rather than on screen to appreciate fully).

**THIS AD USES  
REVERSE BLOCK**  
It only uses it for the larger print of the headline though, and as you can see, the result is that both the headline and the smaller print in the body copy are clear and easy to read.

**THIS AD USES  
REVERSE BLOCK**  
It uses it for both the larger print of the headline and the small print of the body copy, and as you can see, the result is that the smaller print in the body copy is not so easy to read.

You can also use reverse block with strong bright colours, but the same rule regarding print size still applies.

Right, having dealt with the make-up of an ad and how to give it an eye-catching look, let's now take a detailed look at the process of coming up with the right words to use in it.

As we've already seen, a strong headline really is all-important. Far too many ads run meaningless headlines such as "Simply The Best!" "At Last!" or "Caught You Looking!" What do any of those tell you about what's being advertised or what it'll do for you? NOTHING! Remember that all people care about is themselves and what's in it for them – so if you're going to get any business out of them that's exactly what your headline needs to tell them.

Furthermore, it should do so in a way that makes what you're offering seem so exciting and irresistible that they'll just have to read the rest of the ad to find out more. So it's not just "Reduce your debts" but "Reduce your debts instantly!" Not just "Lose weight" but "Lose 25lb in

one week!” Not just “Tips for job seekers” but “How to get your dream job!” Not just “Start your own business” but “Retire rich in five years!” Remember – *successful* advertising doesn’t come from making announcements, it comes from creating *desire*.

Sometimes the best way to tackle this is to put yourself in your potential customers’ position and think what it is about what you’re offering that’s likely to be most attractive to them. What problem can it solve or how can it make their life better? Or – as one of the most important rules of successful advertising goes – don’t sell *features*, sell *benefits*. In other words, don’t tell them what it has, tell them what it’ll do.

This point is so important let’s expand on it with a real-life example, namely that of the lawnmower with a grassbox that can compress grass cuttings to half their original volume. The compressing grassbox is a *feature*. The *benefit* is that you only have to empty it half as often. Or to put it in terms that will attract customers - buy this lawnmower and you’ll spend less time and effort mowing the lawn.

Now let’s tackle that from a different angle. What does a person buying a lawnmower really want? It’s not really a lawnmower they want – it’s the easier life a lawnmower will enable them to have. Similarly, people don’t buy a microwave oven because they want an oven, they buy a microwave oven because they want hot food in the shortest possible time. Get the idea?

As stated previously, all people are interested in is themselves. Make it obvious to them that your product or service will in some way make their life better, and as long as the price is right, they’ll be happy to pay you for it.

The other important point to make here is that the majority of buying decisions are driven by emotion rather than logic. Want proof?

Logic (and independent testing) tells you that stores’ own brand clothing is perfectly good, but that doesn’t stop millions of people paying over the odds for “designer” clothes just so that they can be seen wearing the “right” label or logo. That’s because they think it will make them look better or be accepted as part of the “cool” crowd – an emotional rather than genuine benefit.

Logic also tells you that you don’t need an expensive hand-built 400bhp sports car when a small mass-produced family car will get you from A to B just the same and do it for less money – but your emotions tell you you’d still much rather have a Ferrari. That’s because driving a Ferrari will not only make you feel special (unlike driving some tin box on wheels) it’ll also enable you to enjoy surging acceleration and pin-sharp handling - and be far more likely to help you get laid. Whether that last one is an emotional benefit or a genuine one I’ll leave up to you...

The simple fact is that people always prefer to spend money on things they think will make them feel good or look good rather than on things they really need. In other words, people are emotionally attracted to things that will let them enjoy more free time, more fun, more prestige/kudos, greater success, more money or make them more attractive, so if possible always try and pitch your ad at their emotions.

Note however that you should only do this in a positive way.

That's to say by telling them that using your product or service will have a positive effect on their lives, be it making them more attractive (better loved) richer (more financially secure) or healthier (more physically secure). Never do it in a negative way by trying to play on the emotion of fear by telling them that **not** using your product or service will result in them having less of the above because experience shows that approach doesn't work in advertising.

This brings us to another important point to bear in mind, namely that people don't buy prevention, they buy cures. This is easily demonstrated using another true to life example.

Governments the world over spend huge amounts of money every year on campaigns highlighting the dangers of smoking – a habit which is expensive, causes all sorts of health problems including premature ageing in women and erection problems in men and has no beneficial effects whatsoever. And yet every year large numbers of young people won't "buy" this advice, even though they're getting it for free, and start smoking. Why?

Maybe because it's because the campaigns are inevitably negative (fear emotion) so they switch off, or maybe it's just because they don't think 'it' will happen to them, even though large numbers of people all over the world die as a result of smoking every year. Or maybe it's just that the emotional pull of smoking (the belief that it makes you look grown up/macho/cool etc.) completely overrides the logic of the warning.

So what happens? A few years down the line and they're diagnosed as having lung cancer. They wouldn't take the **free** advice that would have prevented the problem in the first place, but oh boy what won't they give for a solution to that problem now!

An extreme example perhaps, but a true one and one that hopefully gets across the point that the old adage that "prevention is better than cure" might be true but it usually isn't profitable. As previously stated, people generally don't buy prevention, they buy cures – and the faster, simpler and more affordable or effective the cure the more likely they are to buy it.

Having got that out of the way let's continue with the mechanics of actually writing your ad.

Getting back to headlines, the way to compose those, bearing in mind what we've just covered, is simply to write down all the ideas you can come up with, good, bad or ugly. This process can take several days, because once you've started to think about it you never know when an idea is going to pop into your head, so it's an idea to have a handy notebook to write them down in.

Once you have several alternative ideas you'll then need to go through the process covered a little later in this chapter of refining them and then choosing the one that will best grab your potential customers' attention. And if you're not sure which that is, conduct some market research and ask friends, colleagues or family members. But whatever you do don't rush it because getting the headline right is the most important part of writing your ad.

If your ad's large enough you might want to use a sub-heading. These aren't absolutely necessary, but they are a useful way of reinforcing the headline by providing an extra snippet of detail to further increase the reader's interest and lead them into the body copy. The best way of writing sub-headings is to try and encapsulate what you're offering into one short enticing sentence that makes it seem so attractive that people will want to read the body copy to find out more.

Body copy should enlarge on headline/sub-headline by giving more details of the benefits of your product or service. When it comes to writing the body copy, you should make a list of all the things your product/service can do along with details of any relevant facts/proof, and then convert this list into short punchy sentences. This is where you really sell your product or service to the reader by creating a desire for it, so it's not enough to merely tell them about it, you've got to make them want it. So give them the what, the how and the why of the things your business/product will do to make life better for them, along with how easily/quickly/ brilliantly it'll do it. And remember at all times – don't sell *features*, sell *benefits*.

Body copy should be brief and to the point and written in the sort plain English most people speak. Don't worry about being ungrammatical and always avoid jargon unless the people who will actually buy (as opposed to merely use) your product/service habitually use it themselves. If in doubt play safe and don't use it at all. The most important thing is that your body copy is brief, understandable and persuasive.

And finishing it off with some sort of offer or promotion, time limited or otherwise, can help to make it even more persuasive in getting people to respond quickly, so it's always well worth considering.

On the subject of response, small ads for companies selling products generally get better response if run as two stage rather than one stage. That's to say, rather than trying to sell a product directly "off the page" (one stage advertising) you merely use the ad as a "lead generator" to get interested people to phone in or send off for more information.

That's because while it's difficult to get people to send you money purely on the basis of a small ad, it isn't difficult to get them to write in for more information – especially if that information is FREE (or obtainable for the price of an SAE).

This is especially true if you're selling high price items. In fact trying to sell high price items "off the page" in low cost ads is a sure recipe for failure because people don't want to risk large amounts of money on the basis of the small amount of information given in a small ad. So if your business deals in medium to high price items play it safe and always go for two stage advertising.

Conversely, you should also never run high price ads for low cost items because the chances are you'll struggle to sell enough to break even. Yes, there are those companies that regularly run big expensive full colour ads for 'collectable' plates etc. in large numbers of magazines, but these ads usually cost more to place than they make in direct sales. Where these companies really make their money is in follow-up sales of other similar items to the collectors whose names (and interests) they got from responses to the first ad, who they can then contact cheaply direct by mail. If your business operates mail order you should aim to build up and mail your own database of customers too – it's the ultimate targeted advertising.

To summarise the advantages of two-stage advertising then, from your potential customer's point of view the advantage is that replying to your ad doesn't involve them risking any money. The advantages from your point of view are that you get much better response, you can build up a database of potential customers (even if they don't buy anything now they might buy something from a mailing later) and that you can say far more about your product or service in your reply pack than you can in a small ad, with testimonials, examples, proof etc.

Of course there's not much point in coming up with a brilliant ad that generates lots of response only to then screw things up by sending out poor leaflets/brochures.

How to produce order-pulling leaflets/brochures could fill a chapter in itself but that's not really the point of this book. Suffice it to say that any literature in the reply pack you send to people responding to your two stage ad should follow the same basic rules as for the ads themselves: i.e. don't tell them your company history, do tell them what your product/service can do to make life better for them, always make it easy to read, appeal to emotion rather than logic and sell benefits not features. And if you haven't got the time or the confidence to tackle the task of writing long brochure copy yourself, you might find it worthwhile enlisting the services of a professional copywriter.

The final point to make about two stage advertising is that you can often increase your order rate by including a "carrot" such as a discount voucher or bonus offer in your reply pack, and it's a good idea to place a time limit on these to spur your respondents into ordering quickly.

We come now to the second keystone of advertising - the USP, which stands for Unique Selling Proposition. This basically means something you or your product offer or do that your competition don't, so that if people want it (which if you get your advertising right they will) they know they'll have to come to you to get it.

Odd as it may sound, your USP doesn't actually have to be unique – it just has to seem like it. Here's a real life example of a non-unique USP that helped to sell a common product.

It concerns a brand of toothpaste launched back in the 1960s. At the time, advertising for all the other brands concentrated on the main function of toothpaste, namely that it cleans your teeth and keeps them healthier. Then some copywriter looking for a new angle caught on to the fact that cleaner teeth result in fresher breath. Hey presto – one USP. The fact that all the other brands of toothpaste gave you fresher breath as well didn't matter – this was the only one that said it did in the ads and that was good enough to make it *seem* unique in the minds of the public.

Note also that while the previous campaigns had targeted prevention and logic, this highly successful campaign targeted *emotion* – get fresher breath and become a more attractive person with all the social and physical perks that leads to. Implied rather than stated admittedly, but that's the message people got.

So as you can see, you don't actually need to have something that's truly unique to have a USP, you just need to promote some aspect that your competition don't. And if that gives the public the impression that it's unique, well that's down to them – you haven't actually *stated* that you're offering something that nobody else does.

Of course if there really is something unique about what you offer then promote it for all it's worth. An example here is the world's first bagless vacuum cleaner. Of course the fact it didn't use a bag was merely a feature - the advertising quite rightly sold it on the benefit this brought, namely that with no bag to clog with dust there is no loss of suction so it always gives maximum cleaning power.

The fact that this quickly went on to become the best selling vacuum cleaner on the market should help to convince you of the effectiveness of selling benefits rather than features and the power of having a USP.

If there isn't currently anything unique about your business or product then try and come up with something that will give you that edge on your competition.

Say for example you sell lawnmowers. You don't just want another ad on a page saying "We sell lawnmowers" stuck in among a load of other ads saying "We sell lawnmowers". What you want is an ad that jumps out and says "You're better off buying a lawnmower from us!"

In this case, chances are you'd be selling the same lawnmowers as your competitors, so with no chance of getting a USP on the product you'd have to go for a USP on the service. So what could you do? You could pinch an idea from the car trade and offer trade-ins on customers' old lawnmowers perhaps. Or you could offer customers 12 months on-site repairs plus a courtesy lawnmower if you had to take theirs away. Either way, you're offering them a *benefit* (there's that word again) if they deal with you.

Let's run with the trade-in idea to see how we can turn that into a headline. The basis of the trade-in is that if they buy a new lawnmower from you, you'll buy their old lawnmower from them, or in other words "Buy a lawnmower from us and we'll buy one from you".

Not bad, but a bit long, so let's come up with a few more ideas. You're basically wanting them to give you their existing lawnmower in part exchange for a new one, so how about "We want your lawnmower"? OK, maybe not. You're offering something of benefit to people wanting to replace an old mower, so how about "Old lawnmowers wanted"? Still doesn't really push that USP does it? But consider what you're offering, develop that last idea a bit more and you get "Cash paid for old lawnmowers!". Now there's a headline that pushes the USP in a way that should grab the eye (and then the business) of anyone looking to pension off their old mower and replace it with a new one. (Your body copy would of course qualify this by explaining that this was a trade-in deal and not an offer to buy junk!).

That's just one possibility that came from quickly scribbling a few ideas down as they came to me, but it serves to show how one idea can lead to a better one. Also note that the exercise has produced a headline that's the total opposite of the boring "We sell lawnmowers" type of thing that we set out to avoid and gives us one that sells lawnmowers by offering to buy lawnmowers. But you'd never have thought of doing that before – but hopefully by now you'll not only be thinking about advertising in a completely different way but also fully appreciate the benefits (to you) of selling benefits and of having a USP.

Let's have a go at another one. Say this time that you run a company that can help people who've run up a huge stack of debts with credit cards, loans for a new car etc. to reduce their overall monthly payments by consolidating their separate debts into one large one with you. The problem is that all your competitors can do exactly the same, so what could you do to persuade people to deal with you instead of some other debt management company? Well you could offer to pay off a portion of the overall amount up-front when people transfer their debts to you. In other words, by doing business with you they can *reduce their debts instantly!* Sound familiar?



Consider the psychology of this example. Logic would have told these people that they were living beyond their means when running up their debts, but logic was overridden by the emotional “feel good factor” of making the purchases that were putting them deeper in debt. And do people who are in debt really want a better way of managing their debt? NO! What people who are in debt really want is to ***get out of debt***. Anything that enables them to reduce their debts puts them a step in that direction and is therefore of ***benefit*** (yes, it’s that word yet again) to them. It’s also helping to put a positive emotional slant on a negative situation and providing them with a ***solution***.

Now if you’re thinking that I’ve been repeating myself somewhat in this chapter you’d be right. That’s because these are vitally important points I’m making, and by both repeating them and covering them from slightly different angles there’s more chance of them sinking in and therefore of you being able to compose better, more profitable ads. After all, that is why you bought this book.

Even with the repetition there’s been a lot to take in from the last two chapters, so on the next page is a handy checklist giving all the important points to remember.

# **RULES OF SUCCESSFUL ADVERTISING**

- Always target your market as accurately as possible.
- Always start by advertising in the publication that will let you reach the maximum market for the minimum money.
- Always do a quick break-even calculation – if more than five sales required don't bother.
- Always place your first ad as a one-off.
- Always try to negotiate a lower than rate card price.
- Never pay more for an ad than you can afford to lose.
- Never be persuaded to run ads that you don't really want to.
- Never pay for an ad in a publication you haven't seen – it might be bogus.
- Always try and get your ad placed where you want it or at least on a right hand page.
- Consider placing your first ad in a suitable 'themed' or 'seasonal' issue if possible to help maximise response.
- Always bear in mind lead times and book your ad in good time.
- Don't run high priced ads for low priced items.
- Don't run low price ads trying to sell medium/high price items "off the page". Use two-stage advertising instead.
- Build a database of both respondents and buyers from your ads to use for mailshots.
- Use strong bright colours for headlines and weak pale colours for backgrounds.
- Always make your ad clear and easy to read.
- Don't waste costly advertising space on unnecessary images or graphics.
- Include a "carrot" – preferably time limited – in any mailshots or reply packs.
- Don't just tell – SELL!
- Don't sell features - sell BENEFITS!
- Appeal to emotion (but only positive emotion) rather than logic.
- Always use the A.I.D.A. principle – ATTENTION, INTEREST, DESIRE, ACTION!
- If possible, establish and promote your USP.
- Always experiment with different ads and publications to try and improve your results. (More on this in the next chapter.)

# KEYING

Henry Ford once said that he knew for a fact that half his advertising budget was wasted, the problem was he didn't know which half.

Continuing to pay out good money for ads that aren't producing good results is obviously not very good for your business, but how can you tell which ads are producing the results and which aren't? The answer - at least as far as printed ads is concerned - is called keying.

Keying is a very simple method of letting you gauge the effectiveness of any ad you place and basically consists of a special code or key inserted into your mailing address given in the ad. So for example, an ad placed in the ***Daily Drivel*** could have Dept DD in the mailing address, whereas an ad in the ***Sunday Sleaze*** would have Dept SS. An alternative would be to use numbers, so you'd have Dept 100 in the first publication, Dept 200 in the second etc. Take a look through the small ads in the major papers and you're bound to find examples of this.

All you have to do then is to monitor all your correspondence for keys, and by counting and recording how many letters carry a particular key you can see how much response is being generated from each publication you advertise in.

So if you advertise simultaneously in the ***Daily Drivel*** and the ***Sunday Sleaze*** and your keying shows that your ad in the ***Daily Drivel*** has generated 200 enquiries while your ad in the ***Sunday Sleaze*** has generated only 100, you'll know that - all other things being equal - the ***Daily Drivel*** is the better publication to advertise in. ***Or is it?***

Not necessarily, because of course it's not enquirers you're after, it's **BUYERS**.

By continuing your monitoring process to see how many of those enquirers then place an order with you, you might discover that only 25 of the 200 enquirers to your ad in the ***Daily Drivel*** actually get round to placing an order, whereas 50 of the 100 from the ***Sunday Sleaze*** become buyers. So which is the better publication now?

You see, keying not only enables you to tell which publications are generating interest in your business, but by following through with your monitoring you can tell which publications are generating business for your business - and how much.

That's not just down to the number of buyers of course - it's also down to how much each buyer spends, with some publications attracting a more affluent readership than others. So you might find that while only half as many ***Daily Drivel*** readers as ***Sunday Sleaze*** readers actually place an order, those orders might, on average, be three times the amount. So again - which is the better publication now?

Ultimately of course what you're trying to establish is the amount of business any ad generates in relation to how much the ad cost, and keying enables you to do this. Any ad that's generating several times its cost in order value is obviously working well and worth continuing. Any ad that's failing to bring in enough business to cover its costs obviously isn't.

Keying not only enables you to compare responses to the same ad in different publications, it also enables you to compare responses to different ads in the same publication.

For example, you might run an ad for three issues and find that while it's making a profit it's not as much as you'd hoped it would be. Consequently you come up with what you think is a better ad and run that for the next three issues. If the key for your original ad was Dept. DD or Dept. 100, then the key for your second ad would be Dept. DD2 or Dept. 102. This would obviously enable you to monitor the response to your second ad to see if it was more or less successful than the first.

So there you have it - a simple but highly effective method of establishing which of your ads are producing good results and which aren't.

It's something that would have made old Henry wish he could have sold cars just by using small ads – and makes a lot of highly paid advertising agency types glad that you can't.

# PRESS RELEASES

Though not actually ads, used properly, press releases can be a very good way of promoting your business in suitable publications, and best of all, *you don't have to pay for the privilege!* In fact in exceptional cases publications will even **PAY YOU** for the privilege of promoting your business in their pages, though that is very rare and not something you should expect.

Note however the 'used properly' bit in the above paragraph. Used *improperly*, press releases are just a waste of time, paper and stamps. So how do you use them properly? You send editors press releases they will actually want to use rather than just throw in the bin. It's as simple as that.

And it is simple when you know how to do it, which means knowing a bit about editors.

All editors, whether of local small town papers or major international magazines, need content to fill their publication's pages, otherwise they have no publication - *but it must be content that's of interest to their readers*. What this basically boils down to is that editors of local papers will be interested in press releases with a local slant, while editors of magazines will be interested in press releases about something relevant to the topic of their magazine.

Furthermore, editors have a tough job to do. They're very busy people and inevitably have a lot of stuff to look through every day, so the first thing a good press release has to do is to grab their attention at a glance and generate interest. Editors are also always in a rush to get their publication together before the deadline. Consequently they hate anything that looks like making the job slow and difficult and love anything that will help make the job quick and easy – which is the other thing a good press release has to do.

Let's expand on that.

Firstly, getting attention at a glance and generating interest basically uses the same techniques as for an ad, but with a subtle difference. That's because an ad is an ad and a press release isn't. Or to put it another way, editors aren't mugs and will only run blatant ads in the advertising section for people who pay for them. Your headline therefore needs to highlight to the editor that your press release contains information that's *newsworthy*. Which means it has to contain a story that's of real interest to the readers rather than just a blatant plug for your business. Fail to do this and it'll be straight in the bin.

What the editor sees as newsworthy can depend on the publication, the time and the way you word your headline. Let's look at some examples.

A press release headed "Sew & Sew to expand" is hardly likely to merit a second glance from the busy editor of a local daily paper before he consigns it to the bin, whereas one headed "100 NEW JOBS TO BE CREATED BY LOCAL FIRM" instantly hits him with a human interest angle likely to appeal to his readers.

Similarly, the editor of a national motoring magazine is far less likely to take any notice of a press release headed "Widgets R Us announce the new XZ400" than he is of one headed "REVOLUTIONARY DEVICE PROVEN TO REDUCE FUEL CONSUMPTION BY 25%!"

Regarding timing, that can be a matter of either anticipating or reacting to events. Or luck. For example, if a publication is short of editorial content it means that the editor's going to be desperate for something to fill the pages and therefore far more likely to use your press release! Alternatively, many publications like to run 'themed' issues every so often, so any press release that ties in with the appropriate theme is also far more likely to get used.

Sometimes you can anticipate and plan for this (e.g. Christmas or national anniversary celebrations) and sometimes it's just a matter of luck. When trying to plan for this with monthly publications bear in mind that they generally work up to three months ahead (though with the 'news' pages this can be around one month) so check this with your target publications and make sure you get your press release in early enough. Always better to be too early than too late, and you can prevent the risk of your press release being used too soon by putting a release date on it.

As for reacting to events, that comes down to being able to tie your product or expertise to something in the news. Say for example you're an accountant and the government announces new taxes – as they do. If your financial expertise enables you to spot something devious in the government's plans (surely not!) you could draft a press release for your local paper headed something like "NEW TAX PLANS COULD MAKE AVERAGE FAMILY 10% WORSE OFF". The body copy of your press release (we'll deal with body copy in more detail later) would then go on to explain this danger, naming you as the source of the information.

With this type of thing speed is obviously of the essence as nobody's interested in yesterday's news, so you'd have to get your press release to the paper ASAP to tie it in with their report, either by faxing it or by express delivery either in person or by courier.

Although this won't advertise your business as such it will put your name in the minds of the people and subconsciously establish you as an expert in that field. So the next time they're trawling through the small ads or the Yellow Pages you immediately have the advantage over the competition because you're now more than just a name – you're that expert that was in the paper.

Of course not every business is going to be able to use press releases in this way, but it's a handy trick to bear in mind for those that can. You could even become the editor's tame expert on your subject and get asked for regular contributions...

Another way of achieving the same result is to approach the editor offering to write a regular 'expert's advice' column. So if you ran a gardening centre, you could write a weekly column in your local paper giving gardening tips. Or if you ran a company that specialised in repairing/restoring a certain marque of car you could write an advice column giving expert answers to reader's questions in the owner's club magazine/newsletter.

The editor might even pay you for doing it! If not, then at least you and your business would get a credit, which would effectively give you regular - and **targeted** - advertising that you're paying for with time, effort and expertise rather than with money. Again, it's not something that every business can do, but it's worth considering for those that can.

OK, back to press releases. We've already established that your headline has to attract the editor's attention at first glance, but that's not much good if the second glance makes the rest of your press release look like hard work for reasons we covered earlier, so here's how to make press releases that make things easy.

Possibly the most important thing about the body copy for any press release is that it can fit on ONE page. One page says it can be read quickly, which means it probably will be, while any more makes it look like too much time and trouble. Cut down on the details, change the font or reduce the point size if you have to (within reason) but always keep it to ONE page.

The next most important thing about the body copy is its content and construction. The basic rules here are that your opening paragraph should not only reinforce the headline but also encapsulate the entire story, while your subsequent paragraphs should provide facts to support the headline and expand on the details.

You'll get a better understanding of this from the examples given later, but the idea is to provide a story that can be easily trimmed of the odd paragraph or two without losing its message. Like I said, editors love anything that helps make the job quick and easy.

Ideally the body copy should also be written in the style and at the level of the target publication with quotes to make it look more editorial if applicable and plenty of white space (wide margins, double spacing between paragraphs) to give editors room to scribble notes.

Your press release should always finish off by stating "Review copies available" if applicable (of course for small inexpensive products you can enclose samples with the press release) and giving the name of the person to contact for more details. This is very important because there's always a chance the editor will decide your story merits a full in-depth feature.

Continuing with the practice of making things easy for the editor, it's also a good idea if possible to enclose a suitable photo of the product/person/whatever featured in the press release, and all photos should have a description/caption on the back to explain who/what it is. A word of warning here – never use ball-point pen to write on the back of photos because a heavy hand can cause indentations that mark the front. You should use either a fine quick drying fibre tip pen or else write your caption on an adhesive label and then stick that to the back of the photo. And never staple, pin or clip photos either.

As with advertising, the choice of dealing with local or national publications depends on your business and what you do, and we've already covered how to find suitable publications in the section on placing ads – but with press releases you're not just limited to local newspapers or national magazines.

If your press release has a good local angle you can also send it to your local/regional radio and TV stations. You can even do the same on a national level if there's a suitable TV show covering the subject, so for example you could send a press release about some revolutionary new gadget your company's developed to the editors of national TV stations' science shows.

And then there's the Internet. With countless enthusiast and vocational web sites dealing with information on every subject under the sun the Internet provides yet another avenue for promoting your business by press release. Just use a search engine to find suitable web sites for sending your press release to, convert it to e-mail and away you go – 21<sup>st</sup> Century press release! But always keep your e-mails relevant and NEVER spam (send uninvited mass e-mails).

Going beyond printed media this way is definitely worth a try, because if it comes off you could get what's effectively free advertising for your business nationally on television or even globally on the Internet. And if it doesn't come off then all you've lost is the cost of a stamp. That's what makes press releases potentially the cheapest and yet most powerful form of advertising you can employ.

OK then, that's the theory of effective press releases, now let's see how that translates into practice with some worked examples following on from what we've covered earlier.



# **SEW & SEW**

**Cross Stitch Lane,  
Denim-on-Silk  
10293 84756**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2004

For immediate release

### **100 NEW JOBS TO BE CREATED BY LOCAL FIRM**

Increasing demand for high quality designer label clothing is set to benefit the local economy thanks to clothing manufacturer Sew & Sew, which has just taken the decision to expand production at its Cross Stitch Lane factory with a new unit that will create around 100 jobs.

The new unit will be housed in the old warehouse that has been empty since Sew & Sew centralised its storage and distribution facilities to its Dockets Drive site six months ago, with the company anticipating it will be ready to start production in just three months.

“We were offered a very favourable deal to open a brand new factory in another town, but as converting the old warehouse will enable us to be in production sooner we decided to keep all our production in our home town,” said Sew & Sew’s Managing Director Ann Trepreneur.

The decision has been warmly welcomed by the mayor, Dee Lyted. “This is great news for the local economy and demonstrates Sew & Sew’s faith in both the town and its people,” said Miss Lyted.

Established in 1985, Sew & Sew produce clothes for many of the top designers including Lauren Ralph, Kelvin Clone and George O’Mahoney.

(END)

For more information contact Ann Trepreneur, Managing Director.

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This short example shows the basic form a press release should take - printed on company headed paper, kept brief and to the point and on one page, with an attention-grabbing headline. See how the first paragraph of the body copy not only reinforces the headline but also effectively encapsulates the whole story, with later paragraphs providing additional information or extra detail but being less important to the point of the piece. Note too the wide margins and short paragraphs with double spacing between to give the editor room to make notes, plus the contact name at the end so he can request more information if he wants to. Press releases such as this might appear to be more news than advertising (and therefore be of more interest to editors) but it’s unlikely that the company would have to put an ad in the Situations Vacant section to get applications for those 100 jobs. Get the idea?

# WIDGETS R US

Gadget Grove,  
Toytown.  
1234 567890

## PRESS RELEASE

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004

NOT FOR RELEASE UNTIL 1<sup>st</sup> June 2004

### REVOLUTIONARY DEVICE PROVEN TO REDUCE FUEL CONSUMPTION BY 25%

You can now slash the cost of running your car thanks to the new XZ400 module from Widgets R Us.

Fitted into the vehicle's fuel line, the XZ400 uses a revolutionary process that chemically modifies the molecules of the fuel to promote much more efficient combustion.

Rigorous independent testing by some of the motor industry's leading experts have proven conclusively that the new XZ400 module from Widgets R Us can make significant reductions to both the fuel consumption and exhaust emissions of any vehicle.

Professor Ivor Brain of the Motor Industry Research Association said, "We fitted the XZ400 module to a variety of vehicles ranging from a Fiesta to a Ferrari and our tests show an average 25% reduction in fuel consumption and an average reduction in exhaust emissions of 10%. Engine smoothness and power were also marginally improved."

The XZ400 costs about the same as 10 gallons of Super Unleaded and can be fitted in approximately 15 minutes by any competent home mechanic.

(END)

Test samples available on request.  
For more information contact Buzz Nissman, CEO.

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In this case the press release is clearly specifically designed to promote a particular new product and would be aimed at a particular market sector, namely car magazines. Note how it explains briefly in one paragraph what the product does and how it works and then follows up in the next paragraph by giving proof (the rigorous independent testing) that it works. Once again there is a quote, which not only gives a more editorial feel but, as this is a quote from an independent expert, also helps provide further proof that the product works. Although not necessary, quotes from independent third parties such as relevant experts or satisfied customers are a useful way of adding credibility to a press release. Also note in this case the use of a specific date, before which editors are not allowed to publish it.

# **PHIL FEE LOOKER ACCOUNTANTS**

**456 Bullion Avenue  
Cashville  
09876 54321**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> April 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **NEW TAX PLANS COULD MAKE AVERAGE FAMILY 10% WORSE OFF**

New government tax proposals announced today contain a nasty sting in the tail that could leave the vast majority of families significantly worse off according to taxation expert Tu Hi Fee of local accountancy firm Phil Fee Looker.

“Although the government are trying to give the impression that these proposals will make families better off, if you look at them closely it becomes apparent that they either haven’t done their sums correctly or that they’re trying to raise extra revenue by stealth,” said Mr. Fee.

“So while the much heralded cut in income tax might initially makes these proposals look like good news, when you take into account the whole package including the things the government hasn’t publicised such as the new taxes on coffee and tea, you get a very different picture.”

“We’ve done some quick calculations based on the information the government has released so far, and we reckon that if they go ahead with these proposals in their present form then the average family could be as much as 10% worse off.”

(END)

For more information contact Tu Hi Fee.

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Here’s an example of a press release designed to establish the company’s name and expertise without actually overtly advertising the business. Although this example is only very short anyway, you can see that if the editor was pushed for space he could simply remove the entire third paragraph and the piece would still both make sense and get the message across. You’ll also see that there are certain paragraphs that could be removed from the two previous examples without adversely affecting the message. Constructing a press release in this way makes things much easier for editors and therefore increases the chances of it being used in some form.

## **www.com**

You can say far more about your business on a web site than you can in a small ad, meaning you can multiply the potential effectiveness of any ad many times simply by including your business web site's URL (web address). Obvious perhaps, but amazingly some businesses still don't do it.

And if you still haven't yet got a web site for your business then you ought to consider getting one – though that doesn't necessarily mean having to pay a fortune to a professional web site designer as today's software makes basic web site construction a simple DIY proposition.

The actual process of building a web site and getting it on-line is a subject in itself and beyond the scope of this book, though it's well covered in other books and magazines as well as on the web itself, so there's no shortage of information available. The intention of this chapter is to help you maximise the profitability of your web site (and therefore your ads) and tell you the secrets of effective Internet marketing – something many of the Internet books and magazines don't cover, and which many 'professional' web site designers don't seem to know...

### **THE 'PROFESSIONAL' WEB SITE v THE PROFITABLE WEB SITE**

The way most businesses get a web site is to go to a professional web site designer, some of whom will tell them that what they need is a web site that's 'cool' and flashy and has to cost four to five figures to build and then as much again each year to maintain and update.

What businesses can end up with as a result is a web site that takes ages to load, is difficult to read or use and is a commercial failure. That's because many professional web designers are either from a graphic design or computer programming background, and while some know lots about making things look good or making technical features work they often know little about making web sites that actually make money.

Building a web site the right way can make it a profitable boon for your business, while building it wrong way can cost your dear. To illustrate the point, compare this tale of two real life companies, Boo.com and Survival Books.

You might remember that Boo.com was an on-line clothing company that burst on to the scene with a truly awful TV advertising campaign and a hugely expensive web site. This web site was so 'cool' and flashy that it apparently took so long to load that they had to have an onscreen notice apologising and asking people to be patient. In the event few people were patient enough with most giving up. And according to those that were patient enough, when it did finally load the site was so difficult to use that most of them then gave up as well. The result was that Boo.com hardly got any orders and went spectacularly bust in a blaze of publicity.

Contrast that with mail-order company Survival Books. Attracted by the convenience of being able to sell on-line, they approached a number of professional web site designers, all of whom told them that what they needed was a web site that was cool and flashy. Then they had a brainwave. They decided to ask their customers what they wanted in a web site. And guess what? Their customers said that they DIDN'T want a site that was cool and flashy. What they wanted was a site that was quick to load and easy to use.

The result was that Survival Books ended up with a much simpler web site that brought in enough orders to increase their business by some 20% in one year.

Various surveys among Internet users have revealed exactly the same as the one Survival Books made among its customers – namely that potential on-line buyers want a fast loading simple to use site. Findings indicate that if the first page of your web site hasn't loaded (or is clearly well on the way to loading) in 10 seconds, most people will lose patience and look for another site – which of course effectively means a site belonging to one of your competitors. Think about that.

Admittedly the increasing use of broadband means that more and more people can now download web pages very quickly, but at the time of writing, many people still use 56k modems. And if a large number of your potential customers are still using 56k modems and 15" screens then that's what you should be designing your web site to suit.

The simple fact is that most people don't want to have to wait for lots of silly animations or some big Flash presentation to load before they can view your site. All they want is to be able to find out about what you have available, how much it costs and – hopefully – how to order it, and the quicker and easier the better. If your ads draw them to a site that lets them do that then you've maximised your chances of getting their custom.

It has to be said that many professional web site designers have long since woken up to this and have learned how to produce sites that are very 'customer friendly' but there are others who are still too wrapped up in trying to be 'cool' or 'creative'.

So remember, if a professional web site designer tells you that you need a cool site with lots of animations and Flash features, either he knows nothing about successful web site marketing or he's trying to create more work for himself so that he can bump up the price.

## **HOW TO BUILD A BUSINESS WEB SITE FOR FREE**

Good professional web site designers can be worth their weight in gold when it comes to large, involved web sites with features like on-line credit card ordering facilities or secure members' areas.

However, if you run a small business that only needs a small basic site then the chances are you can build it yourself. It's not hard these days thanks to the user-friendly software available which enables you to build web pages with no knowledge of HTML (Hyper Text Mark-up Language) – and what's more, some of that software is available free.

Both Microsoft and Netscape provide free basic web site software in the form of FrontPage Express and Composer respectively, which you'll already have on your computer if you have the appropriate versions of either Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Communicator. There are even web page templates with Microsoft Word 97 and later.

You can also get all sorts of useful free software on the CD-ROMS that come with Internet magazines as well as on the Internet itself, this ranging from web site authoring programs to the provision of professional looking buttons, backgrounds, headings and so on.

And if you have Microsoft Publisher on your computer then you already have a complete and easy – albeit limited - means of constructing basic web sites thanks to the templates in its Page Wizard and its ‘Publish To Web’ command which enables you to put your site on-line without the need for any FTP (File Transfer Protocol) software.

Having said that, using Microsoft’s built-in publish to web facility isn’t recommended for a business web site because it apparently adds odd Microsoft HTML code to your pages which can cause viewing problems for people using Macs, Netscape or AOL. And that’s a lot of people, so rather than risking losing their business because they can’t see your pages properly you’d really be better building your site with Word or ideally a proper web authoring program and putting it on the Internet with a proper FTP program.

Considering how much money you can save by building your business web site yourself, it could be well worth investing a few hours of your time in learning basic web site design if all you need for your business is a basic web site. It’s really not difficult and it could be very profitable.

## **E-COMMERCE**

If you want a web site that will enable people to buy your products rather than one that merely tells them about your business, then you **MUST** have a secure system for people to be able to order instantly and pay by credit card. It’s no good just giving a postal address and inviting people to send a cheque because it’ll lose you a lot of business. Internet shoppers don’t want to mess around with cheque - they want to click on a few buttons and order it **NOW!**

Suitable ‘e-commerce’ sites are obviously more involved than basic information sites, which is why most companies who go down this route end up going to professional web site designers. Leaving the difficult stuff to the experts undeniably makes sense, but if you do decide to employ a professional web site designer always make sure they build your site the way you want it (i.e. simple, fast loading and **PROFITABLE**) rather than flash, slow and expensive.

However, it is possible to build your own e-commerce web site complete with full on-line ordering facilities thanks to some of the special software now available, though this isn’t cheap and might prove too complicated for complete beginners.

An alternative comes in the form of packages that enable you build your web site on-line using software that’s actually kept on a hosting company’s computer as part of a hosting deal, usually with your site being on their Internet shopping mall. This has the advantage that your site can attract traffic from people who were originally drawn to the mall by another site. It also has the big disadvantage that you’ll almost certainly have an awful web site address that’s just a sub-address of the ‘cybermall’. Something like [www.acmeshoppingmall.com/yourbusiness](http://www.acmeshoppingmall.com/yourbusiness)

This not only looks a lot less professional in your ads than [www.yourbusiness.com](http://www.yourbusiness.com) (as well as taking up more space!) it’s also much harder for people to remember and isn’t going to help get your site ranked highly on search engines. More on search engines later.

No question about it, for maximum effectiveness you need your own bespoke domain name/web address. You’ll find plenty of companies you can register domain names with in the Internet magazines or by typing “domain names” into a search engine. The cost for doing this varies with

the registration company and the type of name you want (.com, .co.uk, .biz etc) but these days it's not going to cost much whatever.

ALWAYS go for a domain name that either matches your company name or reflects what you do rather than something cryptic or meaningless, and you can register your chosen name (assuming nobody's beaten you to it) at any time without actually needing a web site to go with it.

There is a simple solution to the problem of having your site on a shopping mall though, and that's to have a second web site with your own bespoke domain name.

This second site doesn't have to be anything fancy. In fact it only has to be one page with a few words of text and maybe your logo or a small graphic plus the really important feature – a button linking it to your site on the mall. Match the colours and style and this second site will just appear to be the opening page of your main site rather than something separate.

An alternative to this is called 'web forwarding' or 'web redirection', by which the company with whom you registered your domain name arranges for people who type in your domain name to be automatically redirected to your site on the cybermall. Just make sure that you register with a company that can offer this facility.

## WORD WISE WEB

Regarding the wording you should have on the opening page of your site, this should follow the same basic rules as in your newspaper/magazine ads. In other words you do NOT stick the name of your company at the top in big letters but rather concentrate on the product/service you're offering. The exception to this is if you have one of those company names that also serves as a description of what you provide, e.g. Caribbean Cruises.

This is just as important on the Internet as it is on the printed page, though for slightly different reasons. On the printed page you're trying to attract people's eyes. On the Internet you're also trying to attract search engine 'spiders', therefore you need to think what your potential customers are most likely to type into a search engine to try and find what they want (and you provide) and put that at the top of your web page.

So if your company was Smith Merchandising and you sold Star Trek memorabilia you wouldn't put 'Smith Merchandising' at the top, you'd put 'Star Trek memorabilia' because the thing potential customers are most likely to type into a search engine is 'Star Trek'. You should still do this even if Smith Merchandising is widely known as the world's leading dealer in Star Trek memorabilia, because ultimately it's not your company your customers are interested in, it's what they can get from it. Always remember that.

Another point worth making is that if Smith Merchandising *was* widely known as a leading dealer in Star Trek memorabilia then most potential customers looking for its web site would probably start out by trying [www.smithmerchandising.com](http://www.smithmerchandising.com), which just serves to underline the importance of having your own bespoke URL rather than a sub-address.

Now it may be that what your business provides is too diverse to be easily encapsulated in a short heading like 'Star Trek memorabilia', which is where Meta tags come in. These are effectively

invisible key words that both quickly enable web spiders to establish the content of your site and enable you to achieve a higher ranking on search engine listings.

Because Meta tags can't be seen on screen you don't have to worry about making them look nice or read well like you do with a heading – all you have to do is make sure that they list ALL the things you can think of that people searching for what you offer might type into a search engine. Again, the subject of Meta tagging is too involved to go into in detail here, and although apparently not as important as they once were, Meta tags are still an essential part of any good business web site, so make sure you have them on yours.

And when it comes to the visible wording making up the 'body copy' on all the pages of your web site, this should again follow the same principles that we've already covered regarding highlighting your USP, using the A.I.D.A. principle, making it easy to read and selling benefits rather than features.

That's because it's not graphics or animations that will make your business web site successful but the words you use on it (in combination with the pictures if visual attraction is a major point of what you sell).

## **CYBERSPACE**

If you are building your own business web site then you'll need to organise some web space to put it on, and once again this is something you can get for free, although I wouldn't advise it.

Most Internet service providers (ISPs) offer free web space in addition to e-mailing services, though the problem with these from a business point of view is that many won't let you use that space for business use, though others will, so if you already have an ISP check the situation with them.

Even if they will let you use the web space for business though you'll find your site's URL is tied to theirs, so you inevitably end up with a URL something like [www.yourbusiness.yourisp.com](http://www.yourbusiness.yourisp.com) or [www.yourisp.com/yourbusiness](http://www.yourisp.com/yourbusiness), which for a business is not a good thing. However, you can again get round this with web redirection.

You can also find plenty of companies offering free web space by typing "free web space" or "free web hosting" into a search engine. Many of these are perfectly happy to host business web sites but might insist on your site having banners or pop-ups carrying advertising for other businesses - which might be porn sites or even your competitors! Something else you can find with these free hosting companies is that their service isn't always reliable, meaning your web site can be off-line for long periods.

Either way, going for free web hosting for a business web site can end up reflecting badly on your company and ultimately cost you far more than paying for web space with a reliable hosting company, especially considering the low cost hosting deals available these days.

In fact if you need a large site with on-line ordering facilities etc. you might have no option but to pay for it, as free web space is often limited in both size and support capabilities. Like all things concerned with computers, the cost of web space just seems to keep getting cheaper, but as



always it's worth shopping round to compare available deals. Internet magazines are packed with ads from web hosting companies, or you can always just type "web hosting" into a search engine.

Irrespective of whether you pay for web space or not, it's imperative that once you've got your site finished and posted to the web that you submit it to the main search engines.

There are three ways to submit your site to search engines, namely do it manually for each search engine yourself, use an automated multiple submission service or pay for one of the manual submission services. A **good** manual submission service is probably best for maximum effectiveness, but a combination of doing it manually yourself to the major search engines and using a few of the automated services is undoubtedly the most cost-effective.

However, submitting your site to search engines is one thing – getting a high ranking (i.e. having your site among the first few listed, which is all most people ever look at) is another. That's why you should never rely purely on search engines to attract traffic to your web site and should always quote your web site address in any ads you place.

Needless to say, there are ways and means to get web sites highly ranked but again that's going way beyond the scope of this book - and the search engines regularly change their criteria for placement anyway, so what will get you to number one now won't do so in six months.

If you are intent on getting a high search engine ranking then there are professional Internet marketing/web promotion specialists who can help you with that and other web site promotion techniques.

## **HOW TO OFFER CREDIT CARD PAYMENT FACILITIES WITHOUT A MERCHANT ACCOUNT**

As previously stated, if you want to sell products on-line you'll need a secure system for people to order instantly and pay by credit card. At one time taking payment by credit card meant having a merchant account – something that was virtually impossible to get for new small businesses. However, thanks to the Internet things are now different.

For one thing, the banks are starting to make it much easier to arrange credit card payment facilities, having woken up to the potential of on-line shopping and realised how much money they could be making out of all those extra credit card transactions.

But even if you can't get your own credit card facilities it's still possible to offer credit card payment facilities on your web site thanks to a number of companies offering various types of on-line payment facility.

Possibly the best known and best respected is Worldpay, which has the advantage of dealing in a wide range of currencies but has the disadvantage of charging what can be sizable set-up and on-going fees for the privilege of using their services.

Alternatively there are companies like CC Bill which have no set-up fees and which will provide all the coding you need to add their payment/security facility to your web site. However, for businesses outside the USA there can be a couple of problems with these.

Firstly, many of these companies only deal in \$US, completely ignoring the fact that most of the world's Internet users live in different countries and use different currencies. Of course that's no barrier to paying by credit card and the \$US is the unofficial currency of the Internet anyway, so this is only really a problem if you're NOT selling to an international market.

The other problem is that in the USA you can sell on credit card details to other companies - something that's illegal in the UK and many other countries. Not all credit card processing companies do pass on details, but if you use one that does and you're operating outside the USA you'd need to have a warning telling people that placing their order could result in their credit card details being sold to companies in the USA. Of course if you deal with a company that's confirmed it does NOT pass on credit card details then this won't be a problem.

A third alternative suitable for European businesses comes from Nochex, which provides a system of electronic money transfer between anyone having an e-mail address.

You can find full details these and other companies offering on-line payment systems by typing "payment systems" into a search engine and checking out their web sites.

### **THE THIRD WAY**

OK, so you now know that you can build an effective business web site complete with on-line payment facilities for next to nothing by doing it yourself, but even if you're a complete technophobe or just too busy it's still possible to get a basic web site for your business without having to pay a professional web site designer.

How? Simple - just approach your local college, which is bound to contain some 'net head' students who not only know all about building web sites but also will probably be quite happy to build one for your business for a modest fee.

Of course, as covered earlier in this paragraph, having a web site for your business is one thing - having a web site that actually makes money for your business is another.

### **THE ALL-IN-ONE 'INTERNET SUCCESS' PACKAGE**

Now if the prospect of sorting out web hosting, site building etc. sounds like a lot of time and work when you're putting in plenty already, the good news is that there's a quick and easy alternative – one that's been specifically designed to provide entrepreneurs/ small businesses with a simple, affordable means of having a web site that actually makes money.

***Site Build It!*** offers an all-in-one package that includes everything from domain name registration and hosting to simple automated DIY site building and search engine submission and optimisation.

Easy enough for the novice to use, yet compatible with all the established professional web building packages, ***Site Build It!*** even comes with a full refund guarantee and is definitely worth checking out by any small business wanting to set up a profitable web site, whether to promote products or services.