



## What Makes a Good Ad? Follow 4 Rules for Ads that Motivate Prospects

By Kim T. Gordon

If I asked you to watch two hours of primetime television and pick the most effective spots, could you do it? Chances are you could name the ones you found the most entertaining, but could you identify the commercials that had the power to move the audience, really motivate viewers to learn more about or buy what's being advertised?

Now, if you're a bit fuzzy on what it takes to create advertising that actually works, you'll be happy to know it's not your fault. There's just so much ill-conceived advertising out there -- and not just on television -- throughout all marketing media. What makes it tough for small-business owners to understand how to create their own campaigns is the fact that so many of the big-budget ads from major advertisers are just plain bad. They're self-indulgent, cute, and although they may be creative, they probably sell very little.

The first duty of advertising is to make something happen.

Any campaign worth its salt must produce a desired result. Rework your current ad campaign -- or create a new one -- that motivates prospects to take action by following these four important rules.

**Rule #1 -- Good advertising changes the customer's relationship with what's being marketed.** The first step to affecting the way customers think is to make them look at what you offer in a new or different way. A good ad has the power to completely change the mind of the reader, viewer or listener, whether that applies to choosing the best tires to purchase for rainy locales or the qualifications of a political candidate. Your ads can open minds to possibilities by introducing a new type of service or revealing fresh discoveries or facts. Advertising that does a good job of educating audiences -- such as in business-to-business trade publications -- can demonstrate the advantages of a new product. And direct mail advertising, for example, can allow you to tell a deeper story and create a strong, new connection with your customer.

**Rule #2 -- Effective advertising tells prospects "why."**

Good advertising makes it immediately clear why prospects should care about your marketing message. For best results, your ads must demonstrate a valuable benefit that's considered desirable by the target audience. This benefit can be either tangible or intangible. For example, saving money is a tangible benefit, while peace of mind may be intangible but equally desirable depending on your target audience and what you're marketing. What benefits do your ads promise and are your promises markedly different from those of your competitors? If not, you need to re-think your product or service offering from your customers' point of view until the benefits you offer sufficiently differentiate your company.

Rule #3 -- The best ads ring true.

Broadcast ads on radio and television work best when they present scenarios that feel real and true to the intended target audience. Prospects should be able to identify with the characters or the situations presented and see themselves reflected in a positive light. The offer should present a believable solution to fulfill a perceived need. Print advertising, out-of-home, and online advertising, while less able to present real-life scenarios, nonetheless must offer reasonable solutions that meet the real needs of the target audience.

Rule #4 -- Successful advertising moves customers to the next level.

The bottom line is that marketing exists to support sales. If your current advertising doesn't produce, it's like a slacker employee -- your best option is to fire it. Before you design your next campaign, decide what you want your prospects to do in response to your advertising and design each and every ad with that result in mind. Whether you want them to call for a free appointment, visit your website, go to your store, or visit your trade show booth, be sure your call-to-action takes your prospects to the next level.

Next, be prepared to track and measure the responses as they arrive. After all, you can't run an effective campaign unless you know what has worked historically. Continually fine-tune your ad campaign to capitalize on the elements that make the phone or the cash register ring, and soon you'll have good ads that make all the right things happen.