

## Bang For Our Buck - How To Slug Through The Advertising Miasma - By J. Ragsdale Hendrie

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We spend an enormous amount of time defining our Hospitality products and services. Then, we exert our energies to establish some Marketplace credibility. We research, we learn about our perceived Market, we festoon our name attractively for entry, now ready to go to town, we think. Then, 'kaboom', we realize that the Market in which we seek to do business is really a cluttered landscape - noisy, competitive, inattentive, unresponsive, disloyal, hard to please, harder to reach.

But, we are steadfast and understand the need for an Advertising Campaign, which will guide us through that unforgiving terrain, filled with landmines, natural and man made barriers, ooze, dead ends and paths to oblivion. What means do we consider for our entry into that Marketplace?

With homage to Marshall McLuan, we know the Medium is the Message, some obviously more effective than others. So, we look at those choices: television, radio, print, the Internet, flyers, handouts, catchy slogans dragged by plane, supermarket grocery carts, costumed hawkers, mailings, stickers, and, oh, so many more techniques to get out our name into that Consumer domain, We are awash with choices, limited budgets and probably not much sophistication. We are not one of the big guys with fully staffed R&D departments, savvy Advertising Executives, and polished PR professionals. However, we have the same objective - market penetration, presence and share for our Hospitality business, product and service.

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to Advertising, except throwing money down that 'Black Hole'. You may approach Advertising like a well balanced Personal Asset Portfolio - some stocks, some bonds, annuities, and cash - an apportioned sprinkle strategy. Others go full bore with one or two tactics, like newspaper and local radio.

However, there are some verities and some benchmarks you can draw from your Marketing Plan which will help define the means and the methods for your Advertising Campaign.

Demographics. With your research you have created a profile of your Customer - age, sex, type of business, interests, geography and the like. This is your niche(s) - who you want to reach.

Campaign Strategy. You need to do more than a one time ad. The best Campaigns include on-going Press Releases, Product News, Features, mentioning your Product or Service, along with displays, banners, logos and the like. The Campaign is constant, always rotating and mixing your Message.

Niche Marketing. For each niche, there are better Advertising means to reach and influence the audience intended. For Baby Boomers, probably My Space is not the most effective, whereas advertising on the AARP Web Site might be better, just as a targeted group of Restaurant operators would be better served by Bon Appetite versus The Wall Street Journal. Common sense should prevail, for each source will typically provide its demographic data, which you match to yours.

Integrity. Remember, the method you do choose reflects upon your Brand, which can also be a very important message in itself. We do want to influence.

Frequency: Each source will provide information on the number of times your Advertising will run and where. Therefore, you must decide upon what form and sequence you want representing your Brand and message. Medium, Type of Advertising and Frequency will lead you to the next significant factor.

Cost: You have a budget, you have researched the 'Mix' available, and now you attach Advertising commitment to expense.

Score Card. How well did your Advertising Campaign succeed? Many Media companies will provide you data on the Campaign, some in real time, so you know exactly who saw what, when - the accountability factor. You naturally have been tracking responses, inquiries, orders in-house, etc. Incoming activity as compared to outgoing expense equals your success.

There are no guarantees, just like the rained out picnic. Be resourceful, try a number of Advertising sources, adjust your mix, consider an Ad Agency, be innovative, take some calculated risks.

The Marketplace is unforgiving, there is always someone smarter, sassier, newer than you. Your Advertising Campaign must keep you in the forefront, a glint in the Public Eye. It is all about presence. You must have definition and done your homework. The Marketplace also is sensory. Your Brand is the Logo you select, the colors, the language you use to describe yourself - how you translate your passion to that ultimate Consumer and inform them. The Advertising formats you choose, the medium to express your values, and effective Campaign Management will assure your place in the Hospitality Marketplace. Go for it! Aim for the Glint.

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