

How to Get Maximum Results from Minimum Advertising Spend

By Howard Jacobson, PhD

Recently, a company called me because they were disappointed in a media campaign. They had bought a weekend blitz on a local radio station, which for a very reasonable price would not only run the commercial dozens of times over one weekend, but would produce it professionally as well. It sounded like an irresistible deal. The following Thursday, the company president complained to me, “We didn’t get one phone call.” (I cleaned up his language a little.)

When I listened to the commercial, I wasn’t surprised. It clearly was the result of GNITEKRAM.

GNITEKRAM is pronounced “Backward Marketing.” It consists of deciding on a marketing medium before you’ve figured out your motivation, message and market.

By medium, I mean the way you’re going to connect your message to your market.

Businesses that engage in GNITEKRAM decide to advertise in a newspaper or magazine, or on a billboard, or on the radio, or to hold a promotion, or whatever, without planning a strategy for what they want to achieve. At best, it’s incredibly wasteful to send a weak message to the wrong audience. At worst, it’s damaging to credibility.

To avoid GNITEKRAM, follow this easy-to-remember “4-M” process:

Motivation
Message
Market
Medium

I. Motivation

What do you want to achieve? What kind of revenue, market share, or brand recognition increase are you aiming for? How much are you willing to spend? How are you going to measure the results?

Marketing is an investment. No intelligent person would invest their personal savings before setting measurable goals. Yet many business owners blindly spend marketing money with no objective and no way to track success. Maybe it’s an ego thing – people coming up to them and saying, “Hey, I saw your ad.” If that’s your motivation, be honest about it. Just don’t be surprised at poor business results.

2. Message

The message answers the questions, “Why should I do business with you? Why are you different from the competition in a way that benefits me? What’s unique about you? Why should I pay attention to you when I could be playing Quake online or counting the ceiling tiles in my office?” The message is the most crucial and least examined part of a marketing campaign, because it’s really hard to get right.

There are many ways to go about constructing a powerful message. Start by asking your best customers why they do business with you. Think about ways in which your business is unique: service, price, convenience, selection, quality, delivery, warrantee, social conscience, exclusivity. If you can’t come up with anything, you’re basically saying, “Buy from me for no good reason.”

You must get in touch with the essence of your business: the unique way your business serves others. Once you connect with this core, you’re ready for the next step: identifying potential customers who will benefit from what you do.

3. Market

Your market is the universe of your potential customers. The more precise you are in identifying that market, the better your marketing efforts – and the greater your revenue.

For an example of staggering wastefulness, check out a recent study reported in Advertising Age magazine on “commercial avoidance” by the television viewing public. Almost three-quarters of personal video recorder (like TiVo) subscribers fast-forwarded through all ads. Over 90% skipped the ads for credit cards, fast foods, mortgage financing, and home products. Almost half of live TV viewers avoided commercials; using tactics like raiding the fridge or taking a bathroom break or (gasp) starting a conversation.

Television advertisers are wasting huge sums of money trying to get their message across to people who aren’t paying attention and frankly don’t care. I’m not saying that television advertising never works; most viewers did watch the beer commercials, possibly because of their intellectual appeal (but maybe it was just the blatant sexual themes). Of course, whether they bought the beer is another question.

But you can’t afford speculative, blanket-the-airwaves marketing. As you articulate your message, it becomes clear *whom* you serve, and by process of elimination, whom you *don’t*. For example, I work with business owners to help them develop their marketing skills and apply them effectively. I find that I do best with stores and banks, professional service firms, and entrepreneurs.

You can further pinpoint your market by looking at the profile of your current customers: age, sex, income, buying habits, where they live, what groups they belong to, what causes

they support, etc. The easiest prospects to convert to customers will be the ones most similar to existing customers.

4. Medium

OK. You've established goals and measures of success. You've created a compelling message. You've identified your best customers and prospects. Now you're ready to create a plan. What's the best way to reach your market with your message to achieve your goals?

Ask the following questions: "Who already reaches my market? What do they read? Listen to? Where do they meet one another? What influences them? What are their goals and fears? What are they already thinking about that relates to my offer?"

For example, you may discover that the best way to reach new customers is by asking existing customers for referrals. And/or by radically improving customer service to increase word-of-mouth. And/or sponsoring educational or cultural events or political events, or holding a time-limited sale and advertising it with coupons, compiling and using a mailing list, or partnering with another business that already reaches your prospects, or doing something outrageous and hilarious for the PR value, or traditional radio or TV or magazine or billboard advertising, or increasing the visibility of your Yellow Pages listing, or... You get the picture.

Three final thoughts:

First, there are dozens of ways to attract new customers. Most of them don't have reps who make a living selling them to you, so you have to think of them on your own. For good ideas, look at what other industries are doing to market themselves. Get creative. Come up with crazy ideas to stretch your thinking. Then create a campaign based on the 4-M model.

Second, nobody believes what you *say* about yourself. We've seen too many ads for toys that never worked like they did on TV. We've voted for too many disappointing politicians. The way you conduct your campaign, the media you associate with, the offers you make, the psychological triggers you choose to activate; all these are the "body language" of your marketing, and will influence prospects much more than the claims you make.

For example, if you advertise how your business is different from all your competitors, and your marketing campaign looks just like theirs, what are people going to conclude? Your marketing approach must be as unique as your message, in a way that reinforces and gives credibility to that message.

Third, insist that any marketing campaign be financially accountable: create a budget, determine an acceptable return on that budget, and craft the campaign so that you can measure how well it is working. Include a call to action, so you can track the results. The goal is to maximize the results of your marketing spend.

Now if you'll excuse me, there are a few hours of credit card commercials on my VCR...

For a complete System of Lead Generation Advertising that Can End “Advertising Victimhood” Forever, visit <http://www.leadsintogold.com>. If you click on this link, I will give you a \$20 discount. Offer expires July 1, 2003.

Howard Jacobson is principal of **howieconnect**, a consulting and coaching firm that helps businesses attract and serve their customers profitably and joyfully. His services include:

Sales Success:

- End the Grunt Work: Eliminate Cold Prospecting and Start Selling
- Stop Telling, Start Selling: A Consultative Approach to Shortening the Sales Cycle and Winning Customers

Marketing Makeovers:

- Motivated Marketing™ For Companies that Sell to the Fortune 500
- Motivated Marketing™ For Small Businesses: How to Thrive in a Competitive Environment
- Motivated Marketing™ For Professional Service Firms: The Jerry Garcia Method

Direct Response Copywriting:

- Newsletters to stay in touch with clients and generate referrals and repeat business
- Brochures that make you stand out and compel action from prospects
- Lead-generation Yellow Pages and newspaper ads
- Coupon Deck Mailers
- Sales Letters
- Web Sites
- White Papers, Audio tapes, Special Reports and other Information Products

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