

14 Common Mistakes That Stop Your Print Advertising Working

At [Small Business Big Marketing](#) we are passionate about ensuring that any marketing activity a small business undertakes produces exceptional results and exceeds all expectations. To do this you need to be aware of the pitfalls and understand that there are a large number of variables that need to be controlled in order to make for effective communications.

In the list below we list 14 common mistakes made by small business owners when putting together a print advertisement – no matter what size, shape or even publication it appears in.

Now just to be clear here there are two parts to creating an effective advertising campaign...There's the MESSAGE (ie. What you say and how you say it) and the MEDIUM (where you say it). The list below concentrates solely on getting the message right.

One last thing, advertising can be highly effective done well. It can also be a great way to spend a lot of money very quickly without great results. As small business owners with modest marketing budgets we of course want every dollar delivering exceptional return on our investment. I have written quite a strong argument why I believe advertising can be a loose cannon for small businesses and what to do about ensuring it is a much more guided and targeted marketing tactic for your business. You can read all about it in the chapter starting on page 7 of my book [Cha-Ching!](#)

So, here are the **14 Common Mistakes That Stop Your Print Advertising Working** in no particular order.

1. No Call To Action

This is not only a huge advertising mistake; it is the number one sales mistake. You've presented the benefits, now what do you want them to do? The obvious answer is to call you and ask to do business with you. Don't let this be their idea. Always suggest what the customer should do next.

2. No Benefit

Consumers listen to one radio station and one radio station only...It's called WIFM...What's In It For Me. If your advertising doesn't make this infinitely clear then you're barking up the wrong tree. You can read on page 181 of my book [Cha-Ching!](#) how to develop benefit-driven advertising and marketing ideas.

3. Type Faces That Are Difficult To Read

With every new computer comes a plethora of fancy typefaces. However there's a reason books and newspapers and magazines all over the world stick to just a few...It's because they're easy to read. Advertising is not art...It's a commercial exercise that is aimed at growing your business. This being the case, then make it easy for people to read your ads. The chapter starting on page 191 of [Cha-Ching!](#) is all about getting this right.

4. Too Much Information

As small business owners our businesses are effectively our babies. And just like a new parent we want to say everything to everyone about our child. However, rightly or wrongly, not everyone cares about all the detail. Identify the most important bits and keep your message streamlined.

5. Too Much Copy

There is good arguments for long copy ads...However as a general rule, advertising is best kept short and sweet. Take the attitude that people are time poor and don't have very long to absorb what it is you have to say...this forces you to focus on the most compelling and persuasive information.

6. Too Similar To The Competitors

It can be scary being different. It means you might stand out and get noticed. But isn't that what you want?! Too many advertisers fall in to the trap of creating advertising that their category is used to...and in doing so create what I call wallpaper. That is, advertising that gets lost in the background and that's the same as everyone else's. Learn how to avoid falling in to this trap by reading the chapter starting on page 29 of [Cha-Ching!](#)

7. Poor Design

People consume information more effectively if it's presented in a way that makes it easy to read. Ads that have information presented in a way that makes it difficult to know what to read first set them self up for failure. It's much easier for the reader to decide to move on.

8. Inflating Your Company Image

While it is important to present your company in a good light, the 'We are wonderful, perfect, marvellous... yada, yada, yada (yawn)', is an advertising mistake because it provides no information. If you personally met up with an acquaintance that bragged about how great they are without telling you why, wouldn't you be suspicious? If you are great, tell the customer why and let them make this determination. It's a lot more powerful than if you tell them. Neither does this kind of advertising differentiate you from your competition

who ALSO say the same things about themselves. All companies will tell you the exact same line, and it's the one thing that you can do that will make customers tune out your ad.

9. Cutting Corners

New business and small business owners need to watch their pennies. This combined with the inherent risk of advertising and a general resentment against advertising expense, often leads business owners into the huge mistake of cutting corners on the quality of their advertising. If you go cheap, you look cheap. If you do your brochures at home using a bit of WORDART, it doesn't make a good impression. "Cheap" is the last thing you want your customers and prospects to think about you.

10. Boring Headlines

The headline you use is extremely important. If it isn't compelling enough to get the reader to actually stop and read your ad, then you won't be selling anything. The headline must grab their attention and interest, and pull them into your ad. Headlines do not have to be cute, or fancy, or rhyme; but they absolutely must grab the reader's attention and stop them from moving on to the next ad.

11. Big Logos Don't Sell More

For some strange, unknown reason many advertisers believe that the bigger the logo, the more successful the ad. Wrong. The logo is simply the signature of the business...Say something compelling and the reader will look for your logo.

12. Using Reverse Copy

Please don't use reverse copy. White lettering on a dark background is difficult to read and reduces the chances of your ad being looked at—

especially if there is a lot of copy.

13. Graphics That Have No Relevance

Graphics should enhance and support the message so don't have a graphic just to have a graphic. Sometimes graphics can pretty much tell the whole story, and if that's the case for you, then let the graphic take center stage and have the copy support the graphic rather than the other way around.

14. Poorly Written Copy

The amount of text you include depends on the purpose and size of the advertisement. Businesses that want to advertise a sale might have a very limited amount of text accompanied by a headline and a picture of some of the items on offer. Consider the print quality of the newspaper or magazine - a small advert in a poor quality publication will be hard to read. If you're writing a lot of text, it should follow on logically from the headline, build a convincing case and prompt a response from the reader. Back up any claims with facts. Magazine readers tend to dwell on the contents for longer than newspaper readers, so tailor the length of your copy accordingly. Good copy draws attention to the benefits of the product or service rather than focusing solely on the features. All the reader wants to know is "what's in it for me?"

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