

String, pencil & tack marketing

I recently read about “low tech marketing’s prince,” postcards. And, I got to pondering that bit of marketing prose, in relations to low-tech marketing’s king -- community newspapers.

There is no doubt, postcards are a great part of any marketing strategy employed by small businessfolk. Heck, we use them. We send out about 40,000 a week, touting our classified section and to remind folks their subscriptions are about to peter-out.

As the aforementioned prose pointed out, printers can print color postcards for about .05 cents each. The US Postal Services website says you can mail ‘em for 27 cents each. So, for a quick, relatively inexpensive cost (about \$1,600) you can mail out a message to 5,000 addresses. A good deal.

I googled “advertising during a recession” (and I recommend all business types do so, too). There is a lot to read on the subject, over 34,800,000 results popped up.

The overwhelming theme, the number one piece of advice was simple: those who continue to advertise during down economic times, not only survive, but gain market share. In other words, they gain more customers and make bigger profits.

The second theme, was to analyze your marketing -- be smarter about how, why and where you market your business.

Which brings me to Dandy Don Rush’s Number One Marketing Tip. It’s cheap and easy to pull off. I simply call it, String, Pencil & Tack Marketing (SPTM). If you are a local service provider or retailer, the SPTM will quickly tell you where most of your customers are. All you need is a map of the community where you do business, a pencil, a thumb-tack and some string.

Using the map’s legend, measure out five to 10 miles worth of string. Cut. Next, tie one end of the string to a pencil (right on down by the pointy end). Tack the other end down to the map, where your business is. (You may find a use for your phone book here, put it under the map as not to stick the finish of your desk). Now, pull the string tight and draw a circle around your business.

In these tight economic times, folks don’t drive as far as they used to . . . most of your customers and potential customers live within five to 10 miles of your business. The bulk of your marketing plan needs to touch these people. The farther people live away from your business, the less chance they will visit

you. Ask yourself why waste money trying to market to people who don’t care about you, when there are so many people right out your back door?

As American newspapers continue to fail or go out of business, fewer and fewer communities have the marketing opportunities this community has. Not only can local business people utilize internet and direct mail printings, they have a strong, local newspaper group to help them spread the word. This community can reach all those people in the five-to-10 mile range by placing an ad with this newspaper group.

A quarter page ad in the *Clarkston News* and the *Penny Stretcher* (the first our paid subscription community newspaper, the latter our total market coverage product) will be delivered to every address handled by the United States Postal offices in Clarkston and Davisburg -- about 17,000 addresses.

For the same cost as your 5,000 postcards (another \$1,600) your 1/4 page ad would run five times and you would still have enough money left over to be put on our website for an entire year. (Oh, and our website is the number one site in the community, with over 3,000 daily visits, each visit lasting about 12 minutes).

There were a number of truisms from the postcard marketing article that also apply to newspaper advertising and should be repeated.

1. Your ad needs to be eye-catching. Your ad doesn’t have to be art, but it sure helps if it is pleasing to the eye. Adding an appropriate photo or image will help.

2. Keep ‘em simple. It’s an ad that fits in the palm of your hand, not a novel. A bunch of words will not help you. Simple, bold headlines, like “Fall Fashions In!” or “50% off!” work the best. Then explain where, when and a few details down in the ad (notice, your name is not a headline, unless of course your name is Fifty Percent Off, and then you probably have other problems to worry about).

3. Your ads are timely. Use current events, holidays, your special dates to market. Don’t use the same tired ads over and over. It is FREE for our professional designers to change your ad, so use us and don’t let your ad become stale and over-looked.

Let’s review.

You want to not only survive, but grow your business. That means you must continue (or start) advertising. You must define your market area and then get your message to that area the most effective ways you can.

Any questions, call or email me. 248-628-4801 or don@dontrushmedon.com

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**A column by
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