

Killer Advertising and Marketing

By: Kim Cooley

To develop your firm's most killer advertising, you must focus. And, focus starts with a message – but most firms relay the same message: we are big, we are old, we represent everyone, we do lots of things and we do all of them the best. The advertising includes the obligatory photos of people in conference rooms, handshakes, money symbols, etc.

These tired messages usually contain one or more of the following phrases: “committed to client service” or “we get results.” They might say “we represent businesses and individuals,” “accountants for business,” etc.

Branding can help. Branding can:

1. Differentiate you from the competition
2. Show what you stand for
3. Tell prospective clients what they can expect from your firm
4. Enhance the value of your service
5. Put you on the “short list”

Most importantly, a firm's marketing efforts must focus on the recipient and the implied questions the prospect will ask himself or herself when considering your firm: how will this firm make my life better and are those who use this service like me?

To make your advertising efforts as effective as possible, you must find your firm's message. You can start by asking yourself these questions:

1. Who is your audience? (age, demographics, interest)
2. Who are your competitors?
3. What do they need? (challenges, fears, frustrations)
4. Where's the pain? (speed, responsiveness, access, service, trust, budgets, price, risk)
5. How can you become the alternative?

Some firms across the nation are finding their own messages by narrowing their advertising strategies to focus on specific points and sending well-defined messages. How are firms narrowing? By focusing on one of the following: service, responsiveness, style/attitude, humor, speed, price, who we represent, experience, comfort (security), practice group, industry focus, target community, doing it differently or geography.

By focusing advertisement campaigns and efforts on one or more of these narrowed-down points, a firm will NOT be appealing to the masses and may actually alienate itself from other target groups or audiences. So focuses should be chosen carefully and wisely.

One exercise for helping to identify the right focus for your firm is to ask several staff members the same thing: tell me what your firm does and tell me what's different about your firm. Then try to identify common responses and focus on those things or use those things to develop a more focused advertising effort.

This article is a summary of material presented by Ross Fishman during his “Killer Advertising and Marketing” presentation at the 2006 AAM Summit: Mile High Marketing.

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