



Five Tips for Getting Big Impact from Your Small Ad

By Alan Robb

A small classified ad can be a surprisingly cost-effective way to sell your product or service. To make the most of limited space, follow these five useful tips.

Sell the sizzle, not the steak!

Rather than just blandly listing the details, price and phone number, remember that the ad is a marketing tool. Make it work for you by connecting with the reader. Say you have an apartment to rent. As well as the neighborhood or address, why not include some background information? Is it close to bus routes, shops or that hip new bar that everyone talks about? Sometimes the benefit might not be immediately apparent. Is your property going to be more desirable to singles or a couple? Professional or student?

Set a realistic budget

Be prepared to spend money to get the word out. One common mistake is trying to shave off every available cent by simply listing the bare minimum

information (often in unintelligible abbreviations). Include the information your potential customers need in order to want to contact you. Plan to run your ad in multiple issues. If you're advertising in a weekly publication, you may want to consider alternating weeks to save money. Ask for pre-payment discounts that may be available on multiple-issue contracts.

Never say never again

Your ad should have a positive tone. If you just have a long list of what you don't want (i.e. no pets, no credit cards, no Sunday hours, no walk-ins) you will create a negative first impression that's hard to get past. After someone calls, you can qualify them to make sure they're a good fit, rather than the ad disqualifying them.

Inspire confidence

Include a logo or other company details in ads. Let the reader know that you are a legitimate enterprise. It is vital that you are seen as professional. There are a wide variety

of choices and the quality of your ad will directly affect your standing in a reader's mind.

Make every dollar count

If you are placing print ads in multiple publications, make sure you have a method of tracking how successful each source is so that you can avoid using unproductive media in future. Simply asking where callers saw your number can be useful; however they often just say "the paper" or that they can't remember. A better system is to use a different phone number for each ad, or specific contact names. For example, list "Mike" in one ad and "Mary" in another. (This works even if these people don't exist!) When it's time to renew your ads, you'll know which have been most successful.

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