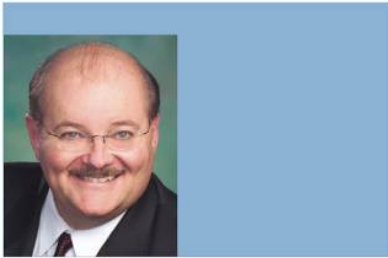




INTERNET RADIO TV NEWSPAPERS MAGAZINES

Create a message and choose media to cut through the advertising clutter

by Doug Knorr



Turn It Around

Douglas Knorr, known as a “retail marketing activist” is president of Knorr Marketing (www.knorrmarketing.com), a full-service marketing and advertising agency specializing in the home furnishings industry. The agency provides strategic planning, creative production, public relations, sales promotions, website development and media buying services. Headquartered in Traverse City, Mich., the firm serves clients throughout the United States.

It takes both the perfect message and the right media mix to build an advertising strategy that is on target with your customers and successfully competes for attention in an over-crowded communications arena.

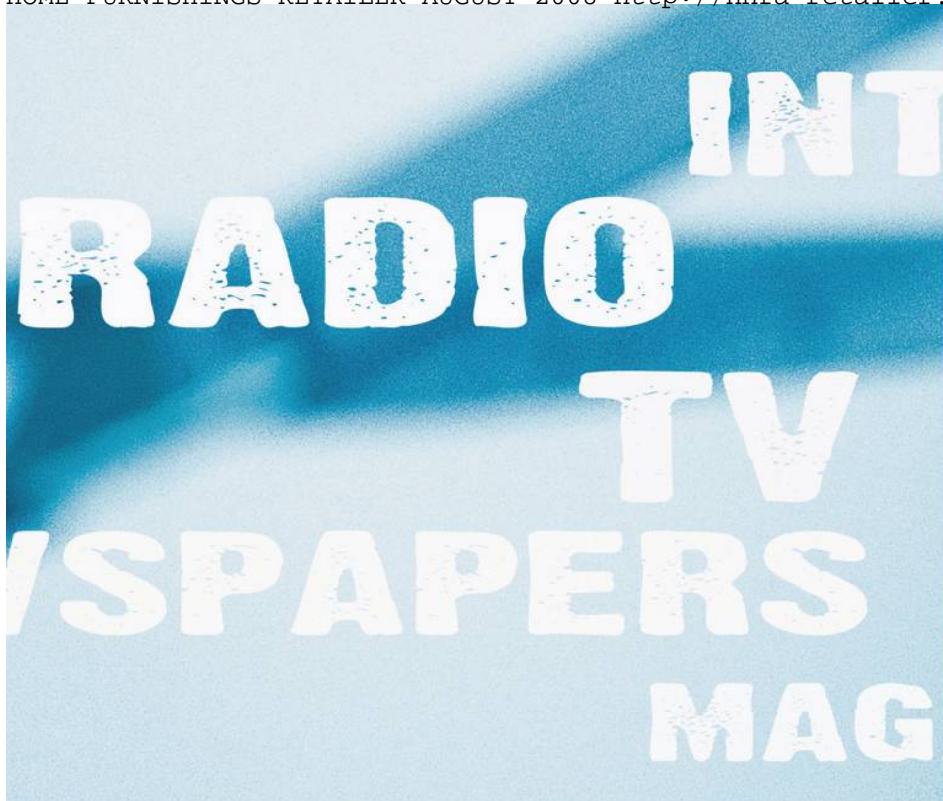
For years we have been saying that advertising does not fail because you chose the wrong media. If it fails, it is because your *message* is wrong!

Selecting the right message that is relevant to your customer and provides a promise they are seeking is always the first priority of advertising. Once the message has been defined, it is the goal of the media to deliver the message that you want to communicate to your customer. Therefore, it is your job to make sure that the message is on target and creatively breaks through the clutter.

However, in this issue we will not focus on the message. Instead, we are going to take an in-depth look at how the media landscape has changed and what we have found important in creating a media strategy for our clients.

First, let's take a look at the advertising situation today; it can be summed up in one word: “CLUTTER!”

It's been reported that the average person is barraged with somewhere between 1,500 to 5,000 advertising messages every day. From traditional media to the Internet, from buses, ballparks and



Today's consumer spends more time seeking information on their own and spends less time with mass media.

apparel — advertising has even entered our restrooms. Advertising is everywhere!

In addition, there is increased clutter in every media. There's more ad space per page, more spot announcements per hour. For example, when television advertising jumped from three spots to seven spots per commercial break, with advertising commanding as much as 21 minutes per program hour, the effectiveness of the commercials was greatly reduced.

Reports from Nielsen Media Research and Cable Television Research reported that increasing the amount of ads per break in these advertising media effectively

reduced viewer's memory effectiveness by almost 50 percent!

This is why the message is so vital! Constantly advertising "SALE" without a unique message targeting your customers is an expensive proposition today, yielding diminishing returns.

With that said, let's take a closer look at how the media landscape has changed. Changing consumer habits and technology have impacted the way we get our information and how we use the media.

The ability for consumers to have information at their fingertips enables them to gain knowledge apart from your advertising.

Therefore, today's consumers are better informed and somewhat wary of slick advertising that overpromises.

This change in consumer behavior with mass media makes it important to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each communication medium. Some mediums work better to build a brand, while others are best used to drive the customer into your store for a vertically integrated promotion.

Traditionally, television, radio and print have enjoyed the lion's share of advertising dollars. However, over the past few years, we have seen a major shift to less traditional media.

By most accounts, television delivers the highest impact of any media. Yet, unpredictable viewer habits make it difficult to reach the same viewer a second or third time within a week. Today, building reputation with television alone is much more difficult than it used to be.

Nevertheless, when television is affordable, we suggest that it be included in the advertising plan. You should also recognize that to compete creatively with regional and national spots, the cost of TV commercial production is very high compared to other mediums.

Radio's strength is that it feels like a friend. However, its audience share has been reduced as well. The good news is that you are able to build strong repetition to station listeners.

Newspaper ads work best when you integrate a strong visual image or picture.

Especially with time-limited promotions, newspapers usually provide immediate, identifiable results. However, in the long run, other mediums (like television) do a better job of building your store's brand position and making it more memorable.

Yellow Page directories reach people who are in search of your product or service. However, if your goal is to make your name synonymous with the products and services you provide, you will find that other mediums do a better job. The Internet is taking leadership over the phone book as people decide to just "Google it."

Magazines are perhaps the ultimate tool for psychographic targeting. Most local and regional magazines provide a relatively small subscription base and are generally expensive on a cost-per-reader basis. However, if the readership fits your store, magazine ads can be a very effective part of your advertising plan.

Signage and outdoor advertising can sometimes become your cheapest form of advertising. The key to making signage successful is the creative message! Your challenge is to say something short, intriguing and memorable — or merely directional. The right image and words are vital to the successful use of outdoor signage so that it does not just become part of the scenery.

I left direct marketing and the Internet for last because those two have made a dramatic impact on today's advertising and marketing landscape.

Direct-mail allows you to tar-

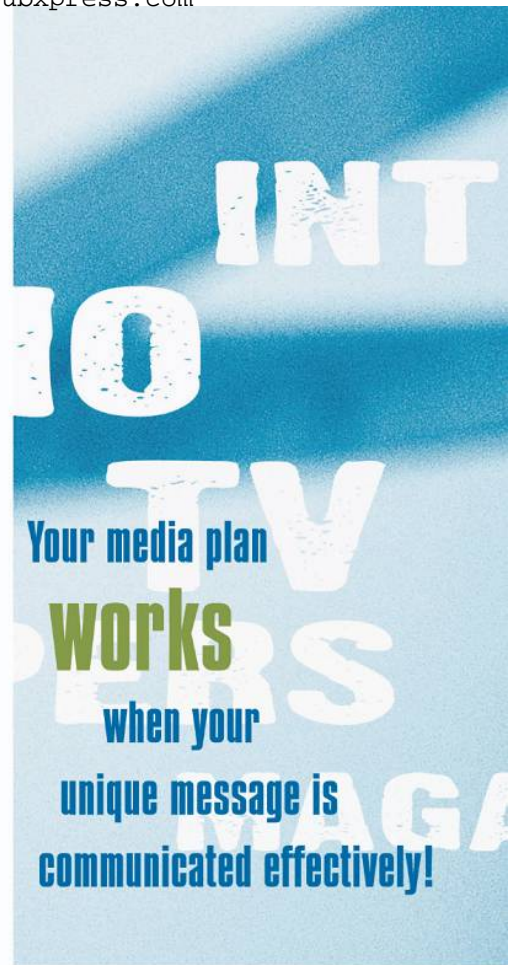
get geographically as well as demographically, and the creative options for direct mail are almost unlimited. For a vertically integrated promotion, we still see direct mail as providing one of the best returns. However, the rising cost of printing and postage makes it imperative that you carefully define your target and hold the results accountable.

It is the Internet that allows you to actually connect to the consumer in a way that a few years ago would have never been thought possible. The advantage of the Internet is that you can reach the world, and the downside is that you are competing with the whole world!

The Internet provides exactly what today's consumers want — information when they want it, as well as the opportunity to compare you against the competition. The Internet is your opportunity to help the consumer find what they are looking for and make sure they understand that you are the best solution for what they are seeking.

Making the Internet work for you requires more than just a lot of images and a pretty site! A successful website is rich in content. It is also a highly functional website that can collect opt-in email addresses from visitors, enabling you to target email news, promotions and coupons to your database.

You must also constantly address search engine optimization (SEO). SEO is about providing key words and key phrases that relate to what the consumer is seeking. When you build these key



words and phrases into your website, the search engine "spiders" will rank you higher on the page.

It is vital that you continue to work on the content of your site until you are on the first page listing of a search, and preferably in the first or second position.

Ten years ago we said that someday the website would take center stage even over traditional media — well, that day is now!

Of course, every market is different. The media plan that works in one market will not necessarily work in another market. It is important to have a clear understanding of who you want to reach and where they are located so that you can develop an efficient media plan.

Remember, your media plan works best when your unique message is effectively communicated! And the perfect message with the appropriate media plan will help you "turn it around in 2008!" 