

ETERNAL SOLUTIONS

manual of life

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Advertising can be dated back to the beginning of civilisation and commerce. Some 300 decades ago shoemakers and scribes announced their services on clay tablets. Ancient Greeks used



town criers to advertise the arrival of ships that brought back cargo of wine and spices from distant lands. Today, businesses beckon potential customers with attractive business signs, pamphlets, brochures, billboards, radio and TV communications, telephone solicitations, door drops, commercial text messages, email advertisements, banners and pop-ups and many other advertising tools.

For most enterprises, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), advertising can be a costly

affair. On the one hand, customers are getting inundated with ever more information about new and allegedly superior brands and services, while, on the flip side, cash-starved SMEs need to be more and more creative



structured, cohesive and integrated in their approach towards communication. Most of them follow an ad hoc method of advertising. Communiqués, be they a direct mailer, a B2B brochure, yellow pages advert or an audio-visual, are not synchronous with each other. What this means is the message, by the time it filters to the target group, is diluted, lacking the impact an integrated communication approach would provide. So when an SME forsakes a certain portion of his budget to ad-spend, he is mostly disappointed. This doesn't mean that SMEs and advertising are opposite ends, what it shows is that the SME in question doesn't have an integrated advertising plan.

For a better business tomorrow, play smart today

By P K D Nambiar

to be cost-effective in propagating their products and services. To be effective, an advertisement must first catch the attention of the target group and then be remembered long enough to persuasively communicate the unique selling proposition of a product or service, so as to acquire and turn customers from potentials to actual ones.

Ad hoc method of advertising

However, most SMEs are not

Many facets of a plan

Advertising is a way to get your message to your desired audience. But in order to do that, you must first have a plan. This plan has many facets, including your marketing goal, advertising strategies, both, creative and media, implementation, evaluation and budget.

Due to constraints of space, suffice it to say, that an ideal SME advertising plan has to take a comprehensive look at all the affecting variables. The first four

questions you want to ask yourself are:

- Who are you trying to reach?
- What do you want to say to them?
- How, when and where are you going to reach them?
- Why have you chosen the steps you have selected?

Integrated communications

Now that you've decided your goals, objectives, target audience, strategy, message, and tactics, you can finally give shape to effective outcomes following an integrated communication approach.

Integrated communications make total sense. If you were going to attempt to influence a potential buyer to purchase and use your

packaging, point-of-purchase, counter-cards, posters, direct mail and/or direct response methods, paid broadcast or print advertising, special events, publicity, news conferences, give-aways, kiddie-clubs, CD ROM's, the Internet, with a message which reinforces itself, irrespective of the media changes. It is the only way for SMEs to get ahead and keep going.

SMEs would actually do themselves a favour, if they resort to a professional communication consultant, be it an internal or an external resource. This would almost always ensure a comprehensive marketing communication strategy which addresses every aspect of the marketing exercise they may undertake. It would also negate

impulse marketing manoeuvres and lead to sustainable campaigns and uniformity of presentation—two imperatives of successful communication exercise.

Summing up, I would like to pinpoint several problems that plague the SMEs and their solutions. These are the

truths I have discovered over the years in my chosen sphere.

Problems with SME sector are generally as follows

- Lack of proper marketing communication strategy
- Lack of experienced manpower to implement the system
- No uniformity in presentation
- No assigned budget
- No sustainable plan for marketing activity
- Lack of information among employees about the various activities
- Lack of awareness about the latest marketing and communication techniques

What they should do

- Prepare a proper marketing communication plan for short-term and long-term
- Define your marketing and business objective
- Prepare your 'swot' analysis
- Define your budget and cash flow
- Make sure all your communication infrastructure is ready and employees are well trained before any campaign
- Define your target audience
- Appoint an internal/external communication consultant
- Select the right kind of media vehicle to achieve the business goals
- Do a proper study and research on the successful similar campaigns
- Evaluate the outcome of campaign periodically. ▲



product, wouldn't you use every means of persuasive communications at your disposal to influence the purchasing decision, with a synchronous message similar in nature, so that it registers more effectively, whatever the media is in question?

To get ahead and keep going

You must use product design,



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