

Beating your "secret" competitors

BY WAYNE ENS

Is anyone in your organization selling advertising?

I'll bet very few of your people are generating real advertising revenues. The odds are they're just fighting for a share of already existing ad budgets.

We all fall into the trap of selling GRPs or CPMs as if that's what business owners want. According to the surveys we conduct across North America, 82% of businesses advertise to "increase sales". Seldom do we find local advertisers who want to achieve certain GRP levels or lower CPMs.

In today's competitive environment, and in the face of media fragmentation, most broadcast account executives are fighting furiously for a share of the traditional media pie. Very few can be found fighting to make the pie bigger, sweeter or more attractive.

Granted, fighting for a share of an existing pie can be more efficient and yield more short-term measurable results than making that pie bigger. But we owe it to our industry, and to ourselves, to continually strive to make the advertising pie bigger.

Our "secret competitors" are selling what we should be selling...the ability to increase sales. For example, real estate developers preaching the "location, location, location" story, persuade businesses they can spend less on advertising by investing more in a high-traffic location. They get it. Commercial real estate is not about cost per square foot, it's about sales and profits.

Software companies dip into ad

budgets extolling the virtues of data base marketing and customer-relations management tools. They quote surveys which claim "It costs six times as much to find a new customer through advertising than it does to keep an existing customer".

Even Al Reiss, the author of *Positioning* and the *22 Immutable Laws of Branding*, has joined the advertising-bashing bandwagon, proclaiming advertising to be a dinosaur in his latest book *The Fall of Advertising*.

And sales training organizations take millions of dollars from marketing budgets to increase their closing ratios.

When was the last time you told a client that the credibility and image created through strategic advertising can improve their closing ratios, in addition to generating more prospects to close?

The list of our non-media competitors goes on and on. It's time we quit beating up our media competitors, and started selling advertising for all it is worth.

The guy who sells the huge pink inflatable gorilla for the car dealer's roof uses impressive statistics about the ability of point of sales gimmicks to increase sales. Some broadcasters have even stooped to selling pink gorillas, trip packages and various other alleged "value added" packages, without selling the base value of advertising first!

Currently, many account executives make their presentations based upon the dangerous assumption that the prospect or client understands the many advantages



Wayne Ens is a Canadian management and sales consultant and a Principal with Noll & Associates, Sausalito, CA. He can be reached by e-mail at Wayne@wensmedia.com.

of advertising or branding, and already knows the inherent strengths of radio and TV. These sales people focus on why their ratings or rates are better than other stations. They attack other media, confusing would-be advertisers, with their claim to be "number one".

Here are three action steps you can implement in your local market to begin the process of entrenching advertising as a more valuable marketing tool.

1. Post the 10 reasons to advertise in your sales department, and demand that every presentation begin with a "Why Advertise" page. Have the account executive identify the three most powerful reasons for that particular client and include it in their presentation.
2. Offer a quarterly award for the account executive who uncovers and develops the largest budget from a non-advertiser. And have them share their success story and formula with their peers.
3. Be "presidential" in spreading advertising's power. In his book, *Selling to VITO (Very Important Top Officer)*, Anthony Parinello explains that top decision makers do not want to talk to typical sales people, but they crave interaction with other successful executives. Send your president, general manager and your sales manager (these should be your best sales people) out a minimum of once a week to discuss the power of advertising with real decision makers.

Resist the urge to sell your station in favour of discussing what advertising can do to "increase sales".

Believe me, you can not sell your station to a prospect who has little faith in advertising. Always sell advertising first, an idea second, your medium third and your particular station last.

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