

E-LESSON #5: Advertising Clutter

GENERAL AGENDA

HOW TO EXPLAIN MARKETING CLUTTER TO A LOCAL DIRECT CLIENT

By Paul Weyland

Lots of business owners have their heads in the sand. Many are in a state of denial about how grave their situation has become, as they find themselves increasingly boxed in by big out-of-town box stores. The idea in this E-Lesson is to get your client paranoid enough that he begins to listen to you when you tell him that nowadays, he **MUST** advertise, or he'll be squashed like a house roach with a steel-toed boot.

There is no question that advertising clutter is getting worse, not better for your client. It is essential that the client absolutely understands this. When he does, he'll be more open to ways you could help him survive, even against big out-of-town competitors.

Homogenization Doesn't Just Happen to Milk

The world is becoming a much more homogenized place. We live in a changing and much more competitive business world, where a street in Austin, Texas looks just like a street in Sacramento, California. Which looks just like a street in Wichita Kansas, that looks just like a street in Orlando, Florida, with box stores and chains like Wal-Mart and Home Depot and T.J. Max and McDonald's and Office Max and Lowe's and Applebee's and Wendy's and National Tire and Battery all lined up right next to each other.

These national chains are fiercely competing with each other and in the process they are eating smaller, family-owned businesses for lunch. Big businesses and smaller ones are competing for the same consumer dollars. It's literally a game of survival of the fittest. Both small town local businesses and major corporations are going under. Murders and executions...uh...sorry...I mean, mergers and acquisitions, continue their relentless homogenization of the world. The stakes are getting much higher. The game of doing business is getting tougher and tougher, whether you're a giant conglomeration or just a small family business.

Look around at many of our small-town, even larger city business districts. Some look like ghost towns. Many old family stores are now closed. The doors and windows are being boarded up. And just a few miles away, the new

HOMOGENIZED BOX STORE businesses appear to be doing quite well, all lined up with their bright, shiny signs and brand-new facades.

Living in the the Shadow of Darth Vader...

Nowadays, if your client isn't out there waving his arms and screaming, "Hey, don't forget about us! We're right here! HEY! WE'RE OVER HERE!" your client's huge competitors will FINISH HIM. He must promote his business in order to compete. If he doesn't devote more time and resources to expand the bottom line of his business triangle's bottom line, he'll get eaten alive.

Scary, huh? Also true.

Nowadays, if a business isn't doing something to attract customers, jumping up and down, waving your arms, screaming, "Hey...it's US OVER HERE! BUY IT HERE," his competitors will bury him.

Advertising clutter isn't getting better every year, it's getting worse. Just take a look around. You can hardly look anywhere without seeing or hearing something from some company. Brands, logos, sponsorships...they are just everywhere. Every event, every arena, even many schools are corporate branded now. How is your business breaking through the clutter? Ask your client how hard he's making it for people to do business with his company, when they're not even thinking about who he is, what he does or how to get in touch with him.

One could certainly argue that competing for consumer mindshare in this over-cluttered, homogenized new century is a real dilemma. But is your client's situation hopeless? Or could it still possible for his business to successfully compete for a greater share of consumer dollars? And, if he doesn't, what's the alternative? Should he just give up? Shut down? Crawl into a cave, curl up and die? No. But, he does have to advertise, and he needs to do it with frequency.

Frequency of Three? Bah, Humbug.

Back in the 1960s a psychologist said that in order to break through advertising clutter that you would need to achieve a frequency of three with consumers. In other words, that a consumer would have to see or hear an ad at least three times before making a decision on whether or not to buy.

But thirty some-odd years later should we still be recommending a frequency of three? I don't think so. Nowadays advertising is everywhere, and clutter is not getting better...it's getting worse. Just open your eyes and ears and you'll realize that with increased advertising, sponsorships and marketing clutter, perhaps more logically we should be recommending a frequency of at least six, maybe even eight.

Tell your clients that it is now believed that the average person, including your client, is exposed to a MINIMUM of 2,500 commercial impressions every day. You might best explain this phenomenon by simply going through some of the commercial impressions made on you in the course of one day.

In the course of one day...

Just for one day, try to keep up with the companies that are trying to get your attention. I did it and here are just some of the things I found.

I wake up in the morning and look at the word TIMEX on my alarm clock and then I hear commercials on my favorite radio station. I get out of bed and put on a bathrobe that says FLAMINGO HOTEL LAS VEGAS. I go downstairs and put RUTA MAYA coffee beans into a blender that says BRAUN. I then put the ground coffee in to a KRUPPS brewing machine. I use BORDEN'S milk and IMPERIAL sugar. I pour SPECIAL K cereal into a bowl and chop up a CHIQUITA (not a media salesperson but a banana). I check my watch that says TAG-HEUER and go upstairs to turn on my favorite morning program on my ZENITH television set. I take a shower and use NEUTROGINA shampoo and DOVE soap. I shave with a MACH-3 razor. I use an ORAL-B toothbrush and CREST toothpaste. Then I apply OLD SPICE antiperspirant and RALPH LAUREN cologne. Even my underwear is labeled...with CALVIN KLEIN Gosh, for what it costs it should say PAUL WEYLAND. My shirt says RALPH LAUREN. Shouldn't Ralph be paying US to wear those shirts? I take another sip of coffee from a mug with TV CHANNEL 24 logo on it and head to my car that says CHEVROLET TAHOE, with the COVERT CHEVROLET/BASTROP, TEXAS prominently displayed on the back. I turn on the RADIO that says PIONEER and listen to several RADIO COMMERCIALS. I pass hundreds of SIGNS and BILLBOARDS. I see hundreds of other vehicles with their BRANDS and DEALER LOGOS. I get to work where people are drinking COKES and AQUAFINA water. I see people smoking CAMEL and MARLBORO cigarettes. I look at my computer that says DELL and my homepage that says YAHOO. I see Internet advertising. People are wearing clothing with different DESIGNER LOGOS. They are drinking out of coffee mugs with LOGOS all over them. When I finally leave for home, I go to the grocery store and see A THOUSAND more product logos. I get back in the car to go home and hear more RADIO COMMERCIALS. I sit in by BARCALOUNGER and turn on the MITSUBISHI TV and drink a stiff JACK DANIELS and watch more COMMERCIALS on TV. Then I go into the kitchen to use KITCHEN AID appliances to make dinner. Finally, it's bed time. I see a few more product labels like CREST, ORAL-B and ADVIL. Then I finally get into bed and read a magazine called THE ECONOMIST and then finally fall asleep so that I can wake up tomorrow and see TIMEX on my alarm clock radio.

Unbelievable! For fun, just try for a day to keep up with the products and services that you are exposed to. It will amaze you. Write them down. Memorize them. Discuss them with your client. You'll find the client often jumps into the discussion, remembering products and services that he's exposed to in the course of a normal day. For many clients, this may be the first time they've ever actually looked at the big picture...how much clutter there really is out there. A discussion like this really helps your client put things in perspective.

Once the client sees how vulnerable his "invisibility" makes him in this over-cluttered world, he becomes more open to OWNING a day, a 'day-part' or a program on your station. A long-term contract on your station might start making absolute sense to the client.

Something Else to Make You Crazy

Here's another little thing to think about. Your proposal and presentation to a client is just one of 2,500 commercial impressions that your client is exposed to in the course of a normal day. Will your presentation to your client stand out, or just get lost in the clutter?

There is an on-line companion video provided with this lesson.

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