

STOP! Don't place your ad 'til you read this!

from Wendy Harrington,
Your Virtual Marketing Department

Do you want your ideal customers to read your ad? Do you want them to remember you and seek you out? Of course you do – that's what advertising's for, right? But you wouldn't know it by some of the ads out there. Don't let your hard-earned dollars go to waste; before you place your ad, run it against this *Ad Performance Checklist*.

To get the most from this process, do the following exercise first: Bring to mind one of your best customers. Now imagine that they're about to see whatever vehicle you've chosen for your advertising (print publication, website, multi-mailer, bulletin board, whatever). *Where are they? What are they doing? Why are they doing it? What have they just finished doing? Is anyone else there? Are they looking for you, or are you trying to catch them while their attention is elsewhere? What's their feeling about your business category? What's their feeling about themselves and their situation in relation to your business category?*

OK, with these answers you have a pretty clear picture of the mindset they're bringing to your ad. Now you're ready to begin. Challenge yourself to say *Yes* to each of the following:

Ad Performance Checklist

- Will your customer actually stop to look at your ad in the place it will appear? Will she be in the position and frame of mind to look at it, read it, and either save or act on it?
- Does your ad specify either the main problem your customer wants solved, or the main benefit she wants created? Remember, if she's not already looking for the benefit you can deliver, enter from the point of view of her problem. If the problem you solve is relatively small, enter from the point of view of the benefit you can create. (Tip: choose the thing that will create the strongest visceral reaction.)
- Do the graphics and/or text make her immediately aware your product/service is for *her*?
- Do the selling points address your customer's main wants/needs, in words she would use?
- Will your customer be able to read all your text easily? Remember that many forms of script, and also white type (called knockout) on a dark background, make people work harder, so if you use these at all do so sparingly and make the text as large as you can.
- Have you limited the number of different fonts (typefaces) you've used? Designing with type is an art, but as a general rule ads are easier to read if they have just one or two different fonts. Be selective in what you choose to make stand out visually.
- Is it clear what you want the customer to do after seeing your ad? Have you told her this directly? (Yes, a phone number IS more effective with "call today" or similar instruction.) Have you triple checked that the phone number, e-mail, address, is correct – no typos?
- Is there a no-risk way for her to sample your product or service? A way for her to get acquainted with you or your business from afar? Reducing the barriers to action help increase the odds that you'll hear from her.
- If there is an offer or promotion, does it "pop" – that is, will your customer notice it right away? Is the offer itself one that your customer will want *enough* to overcome inertia?

If you've checked your promotion against this list, then you're well on your way to better results. If you really want to raise the bar, get some feedback from someone else (ideally someone like your customers). Or call me for an Ad Review – your first one's *absolutely free*.

Call Wendy to arrange your complimentary Ad Review today: 919-208-7484