

ADVERTISING FOR INDUSTRIAL SMEs

By Ian Deavin BSc, M.D. – The Industrial Marketing Agency

e-mail: ian@theindustrialmarketingagency.co.uk, www.theindustrialmarketingagency.co.uk

Over some 30 years working in the industrial SME environment as marketing manager, sales manager, sales/marketing consultant, PR agent and Marketing Agency MD, there have been many lessons – some of which relate to advertising – all of them coming from a distinctly practical restricted budget perspective.

So what works? What is cost effective? How can industrial SMEs create a presence that big companies and competitors would envy?

In particular clients tend to focus on advertising and often do not understand how advertising differs from all the other many forms of promotion - there is a perception that “if I pay for it then it is advertising” – not so – and to understand the difference is to understand what advertising can do and what it cannot – plus how it can work with all the other forms of promotion to get you in front of your target audience.

So let's be clear – the advertising I shall be discussing here is what you pay for directly in media supplied by other publishers, e.g. space in journals, banners on websites, enhanced entries in directories, paid for entries in journal newsletters/newsflashes and the like. So, NOT PR/editorial (unless you pay the publisher to include it), not free entries in directories, not your own newsletters, not brochures.

Advertising then is what you put in space in someone else's publication, where you can say pretty much what you like – so long as it is legal, decent and honest etc.

Where then to start – well personally from experience I start from a PR program – this is probably the most cost effective promotion a company can do and lays the groundwork for so much else. With that covered then advertising can work hand in glove with your editorial profile so that you can *use your advertising to support your P.R. – and use feedback from PR to inform your advertising choices.*

Clearly publications that think your press releases are sufficiently interesting to their readers that they will publish them for free are publications worthy of consideration for your advertising spend. But before you spend your budget take a look at the responses you have received from this editorial to check that the people who see your material really are potential customers – and sufficient of them to justify the cost.

Now with a measure of understanding of your media candidates - *focus placement carefully – a few packages supported with a contingency fund can be a very cost effective strategy.*

By now you may well have started thinking what you would like to say and this is an important consideration – probably relating to your products, your company ethos and your customer needs – when

you have considered this carefully I would suggest that you *maintain a simple strong key phrase across all promotional activities e.g. "Total Widget Supply" or "Specialist Aerospace Widgets."*

This is a good point at which to *initiate creation of suitable adverts to suit the media and space dimensions that you expect to use*. A good designer or advertising agency should be able to help with this – all I would say is keep it simple – keep it relevant, do not get carried away with costs but spend enough to look good.

Now you are getting to the “brass tacks” – how much do you plan to spend and how can you get best value? Well - *do deals – advertising is one area where really good deals can be done*.

Then *let it be known you are a player – you will get very good offers*

Think about the sort of media you want to use then *advertise online as widely as you can afford – become ubiquitous*.

But *do not neglect printed advertising* which still has major part to play – simple ads with product/application picture plus website address, phone and e-mail are often all that is needed

To enable you to take advantage of deals when they come up *create some stock adverts, e.g. ¼ pages, banners and tiles* to be available at short notice.

When you are ready to commit - *talk to ad reps – they are a highly motivated group of people and generally well informed about their industry. They can do deals with great flexibility and can often give good advice about the best way to use their publication* – after all they also want you to succeed as a long term customer, just as you do with your customers.

This conversation with media reps should then enable you to *check out the packages available* - where often quite extensive coverage can be bought for very moderate budgets – but be realistic about what you need as “bells and whistles” can easily run away with the cash if you cannot bargain them into the package at reduced cost.

Keep the ball rolling - to enhance your company profile - so that you can be found easily and to encourage enquiries!