

## Yellow Pages

Ask someone what's the first thing that comes to mind when they hear the word "advertising"? You'll probably hear something from the following list: TV commercials, print ads, direct mail, brochures, billboards, flyers, radio spots and telemarketing.

The Yellow Pages may not be the first thing that comes to mind when someone thinks of advertising. Yet, as an advertising vehicle, a properly executed Yellow Pages advertisement provides an outstanding Return on Investment (ROI).

Some pundits may argue that the Yellow Pages are a dying breed, soon to be replaced by online services. Not true, online services frequently do not even meet the visibility standards of the print directories. Moreover, they do not provide the breadth of information on local businesses. Furthermore, recent statistics indicate that almost every home in America (96.9%) and business have at least one copy of the "book." Additionally, almost three out of five (58%) of all adults in America say they refer to the Yellow Pages for contact information at least once weekly and over three out of four (77%) say they use the book at least monthly. Further, the Yellow Pages are open 24/7, 365 days per year. Lastly, 84% of people who go to the Yellow Pages contact a business listed there and 49% of them actually go to purchase a good or service from said business.

Quite simply, your potential customers go to the Yellow Pages with the intent to buy. So, you don't have to create demand for your good or service *because it's already there*. All you have to do is convince the buyer that yours should be the business that he calls first.

The following are some key considerations you need to evaluate before signing that year long contract for your new Yellow Pages advertisement.

### Ad Placement and Size

1. Yellow Pages advertisements are placed from the biggest to the smallest. Full page ads appear first, followed by  $\frac{3}{4}$  page ads and so on.
2. There is a seniority system utilized for the order in which the ads in a given size are placed. For instance, the very first full size ad you see is from the advertiser who has been advertising the longest.
3. However, if you upgrade or downgrade your ad size, you go back to the end of the proverbial line, until someone newer buys an ad.
4. Larger ad size does not necessary equate to more traffic to your business if the ad is poorly composed; has an inappropriate message; has a difficult layout; and/or is lost in a sea of similarly competing ads.
5. Have your sales rep show you where the size ad you are considering would fall in this year's directory. What you are looking for is an approximate idea of your ad's position in relation to your competition. Sometimes you can spend a few more dollars to move up in size to be much closer to the front of the section. On the other hand, sometimes you can cut back on size and not lose much relative position.
6. Remember ad placement and size is more important than color.

## Color

1. Research is conducted every year to see if a color ad generates more response than a black and white ad. And every year, the results are the same. Color ads do not outperform b & w ads.
2. Color alone is not the key differentiating element.
3. Color, as part of a well designed advertisement, can be the key element that entices your customer to call on you.
4. If all the other competitors are using color, the only winner is the Yellow Pages publisher who reaps the benefits from the added cost of color. In this case, a clearly designed black and white advertisement would stand out amongst all the competitors using color.
5. The only thing color has been proven to do in the Yellow Pages advertising is increase the price you pay for the ad.
6. Process Color / White Knock-Out / Four-Color
  - a) These ads capture attention regardless of ad placement on the page
  - b) Their illustrations look more realistic
  - c) Color sensitivity can be used to make a powerful statement or to stress USP
  - d) These features can also convey prestige
  - e) Again remember that even these fancy features does not solve the problem of a poorly designed ad.

## Headline

1. Since 80% of your ad's effectiveness is in its headline, your headline commands an importance over and above the other design elements of your ad.
2. Think of your headline as the "ad within the ad."
3. It is vitally important to tell your customers the benefits of buying your products and services.
4. There's not much time, so you have to grab a potential customer's attention.
5. Advertisers should use a headline that suggests a benefit for the customer, motivating the individual to continue reading.
6. Unless the company has a universally recognizable name, the business name should not be used in the headline.
7. If a customer is shopping for a product or service, the vast majority of them do not have a specific company in mind when choosing. So, your name at that point has little value.
8. So, you need to say something to the buyers – make a bold statement – tell them why they should call you – tell them how you will make their life easier.
9. Put a headline on your ad that sells your benefits and assures the prospect will read your ad. If you have a hard hitting headline that projects a strong benefit and relates to the needs of your prospect, half the work is done. Some headlines that help you do that include: "How to xxxxx"; "6 reasons why..."; "Before you xxxxx 5 factors to consider"
10. The "oldest, biggest, smallest, newest, fastest, etc." is NOT a headline.

## Text

1. Your text needs to present your Unique Selling Proposition.
2. You need to clearly identify the benefits of doing business with you (and not your competitors).
3. You need to clearly identify the pain that customers will avoid by doing business with you.
4. A poorly conceived and confusing layout is a major impediment to the time-pressed consumer.
5. Type and graphics should compliment one another, creating an easy layout for the eye to scan.
6. You need to avoid the temptation to include every benefit, product line, association logo, etc.
7. You need to use 'white space' (open area) to allow your customer to logically find the desired information.
8. Make sure you include the very basic service or product – your customer never takes these for granted and neither should you.
9. A majority of customers desire to be reassured of the company product or service. Warranties, guarantees and other pledges build trust about the quality, professionalism and strength of an organization.
10. Guarantees will make your credibility skyrocket.
11. For service oriented businesses, customers want to know about the quality of their work, their experience and credibility, and an indication that they can be trusted.
12. Also consider incorporating other security factors such as memberships to national associations, popular product logos, images that identify the business owner or location, testimonials from well-known customers, clients, and/or personalities.
13. Write like you talk. Inject your personality into everything you write. No one wants to read boring and stuffy legal mumbo jumbo.
14. Use short sentences and words. Use simple language.
15. Don't sell them your type of product or service, but sell them on the benefits of your business.
16. Sell them why they should call you and nobody else.
17. Use the word 'you'
18. Avoid bragging – Don't boast "biggest and best." It turns people off, even if it is true.
19. Avoid overused phrases, such as "for all your <blank> needs."
20. Avoid "menu listing" of products and services that are in no apparent order or flow.
21. Remember that space is limited, so you need to keep your copy to the point.

## Illustrations

1. The image (illustration or photograph) is the first element that the reader will see.
2. Graphic images should not be used for art's sake.
3. Valuable space in an ad should always tell a strong message – if it doesn't, leave it out.
4. The Yellow Pages are about information, but it is the graphics which create a first (and often lasting) impression.
5. Graphics play a leading role in bringing the buyer's attention to the seller's message.
6. A picture can say a thousand words.
7. If your picture isn't worth a thousand words, find one that is!
8. Your images must be eye-grabbing and compelling that help to reinforce your Unique Selling Proposition.
9. Don't put in photos or graphics of things you don't sell.
10. Putting in logos simply because they "fit" is not a good idea.

## Design

1. When advertising in the Yellow Pages, remember the Yellow Pages maxim: ***"Where the eye stops, the sale begins."***
2. If your Yellow Pages ad doesn't leap off the page and grab the reader, you are wasting your money.
3. Your #1 goal is to draw attention first, before any others.
4. If you look at your local directory, you will see that most Yellow Pages designs fail miserably, giving your advertisement an excellent opportunity to beat your competition.
5. Experts in human comprehension have many "don'ts" in ad copy layout:
  - a) Don't exceed more than 5 – 7 words per line
  - b) Don't center over three lines in a row
  - c) Don't put smaller than 14 point type in a reverse block
  - d) Don't have more than 8 – 10 words in a headline
6. In general, an ad has good flow if you can place a finger where your attention is drawn first and then move through all of the information in the ad without lifting your finger.
7. Keep the reader's eyes heading directly to your phone number.
8. Vary the size of the type, from bold to medium and from large to small, to keep the reader's interest.
9. Avoid typestyles (or fonts) that are too fancy or ornate. Readers may find these distracting.
10. Arial is neater, but Times is easier to read in a block.
11. Highlight with **Reverse Type**. It can be very effective for the company name or telephone number.
12. Use "white space," an important design element. Liberal use of "white space" will help to keep your ad clean, uncluttered, and easy to read.

13. Borders:
  - a) A distinctive border can be used to create a mood or tie in with your products or services
  - b) Bold borders are very effective and very popular
  - c) Hairline borders can also be very effective
  - d) Use a border that differentiates your ad from the others on the page.
14. Remember your ad is competing for visibility and readability with every other ad under the heading. If it's difficult to read, it won't be read.
15. Keep refining your copy until you can provide all the information Yellow Page users want and need, at the same time keeping your ad tidy and readable.

### **Use of Yellow Pages staff designers**

1. Be careful of utilizing the designs from the Yellow Pages staffers. Remember, they are trained to sell ad space, not design the individual advertisements.
2. You have the right to hire marketing companies to design real ads for them.
3. You don't have to settle for the same look as everyone else on the page.
4. Typical advice from a Yellow Page Representative includes the following:
  - a) Use a Big Ad
  - b) Use a heavy border around the ad
  - c) Add color to it
  - d) Use a Bigger Ad
  - e) Make your name and logo really big, and have lots of "white space"
  - f) Use an even Bigger Ad
  - g) Give your hours of operation, phone number, address, as well as credit card information (if you accept them)
  - h) Use more than one really, really big ad under multiple listings!
5. Yellow Page staff designers like to center vast blocks of text and change type styles frequently. Don't do it.
6. If you decide to utilize the Yellow Page design service, insist that they develop your ad that justifies the cost. Don't accept their first attempt unless it meets your needs.
7. ALWAYS, ALWAYS demand a proof of your Yellow Pages ad. One small error will haunt you for the next twelve months...

### **Use of Outside Graphic Designers**

1. You have the right to hire marketing companies to design your advertisement.
2. Ask to see examples of other ads that your prospective marketing company has created.
3. You want your Yellow Page advertisement to be an integral part of your overall marketing strategy.
4. Your Yellow Pages advertisement needs to compliment and reinforce your marketing program, hence using an outside graphic designer and/or marketing company can make sure that this occurs.
5. ALWAYS, ALWAYS demand a proof of your Yellow Pages ad. One small error will haunt you for the next twelve months...

## **Target Market**

1. People looking in the Yellow Pages are ready to buy right now. So the challenge is to make the prospect see your ad first.
2. One of the unique advantages of Yellow Pages advertisements is their ability to target an audience in a specific geographic area.
3. Too many companies are sending the wrong message to the wrong readers.
4. Every business has a specific “niche” market and it is important to identify and focus on this special group.
5. Ethnicity, economic class, gender, age and geographic region are examples of customer characteristics which should be considered when creating an ad message.
6. Your ad should also emphasize the “Unique Selling Point” (USP) – which is the aspect, however subtle, which distinguishes your company from your competitors.

## **Call to Action**

1. An advertisement should motivate the reader to call or visit the business.
2. Copy that motivates one to act not only creates a friendly, inviting emotion but also may directly benefit the consumer.
3. The absence of a call to action is a missed opportunity for a greater ad response.
4. Find a way to make the prospect an enticing offer. Including an offer in your telephone directory will dramatically boost responses. It gives your prospect a reason to call you ahead of anyone else.

## **365 Days A Year**

1. Remember that once your ad is printed in the Yellow Pages, it is there for a year.
2. So, it is vitally important that you have proofread your advertisement.

## **Track Your Results**

1. One sure way to waste your hard earned advertising dollars is advertise in a directory that no one in your target market uses.
2. Insist that your Yellow Pages sales representative prove value to you from advertising in his directory.
3. You must also, independently, track your advertisement’s responses. Survey your own customers to learn how they discovered you.



**The next exercise is to develop a headline that will get them reading.** Use the following tips to create yours:

- Some good headline starters are “7 Reasons Why...”, “Only \_\_\_\_ Gives You...”, “Announcing...”, “How to...”, “Here’s Why...”, “Why You...”, etc.
- Another thing to incorporate into every headline is the word “you.”
- Try a “news” style headline...
- If you have a great price and want to highlight it, put your price in the headline...
- The word “free” usually catches peoples’ eye...
- A testimonial-type headline is often effective...

Now, write 10 headlines specific to your customers’ needs, and using the tips included above:

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**Now you want to work on the text of your advertisement.**

What is your Unique Selling Proposition?

What are the benefits in doing business with your company?

What pain will your customer avoid by doing business with your company?

Do you have any guarantees, warranties, or the like to offer?

Do you belong to any recognizable professional organizations?

Have any testimonials? If not, do you need any?

Brainstorm other items to possibly include in your text.

Now, you want to brainstorm in a similar manner about your graphics, photos, and colors to be used in your advertisement.

**Finally, you are ready to begin meeting with the various Yellow Pages providers.**

You will want to present them with your headline, text, and graphic ideas. If you are not satisfied with their output, you can ask them to resubmit additional proposals to you.

Or you may want to consider now going to your own advertising / marketing / graphic design firm.

### **Concluding remarks**

The Yellow Pages can be an extremely powerful and effective weapon in your marketing campaign. Fortunately for you, most, if not all, of your competitors do a poor job in designing their advertisements. So, with a little thought, some research, some organization, and professional assistance, you can develop a highly effective Yellow Pages advertisement.

Remember, a very high percentage of people utilizing the Yellow Pages have already made the buy decision (the 'what') and now they are just need to know from who to buy.

Lastly, no marketing campaign can be considered to be successful without tracking and quantification of the numbers. You must do this to properly evaluate that you are getting the highest return on your hard earned, marketing dollar.