

YOUR ADVERTISING MESSAGE SHOULD BE A REFLECTION OF YOUR GOALS



by Raul Vazquez

It seems simple enough. After all, who would advertise for a result that is not their goal? The reality is, however, that a great number of auto dealers do exactly that. Not on purpose, but rather because they do not associate their goals with their advertising. You would think that with the amount of money dealers spend on advertising that they would have some specific goals in mind. I visited a dealership less than two weeks ago that spends \$150,000 per month on advertising. Aside from the obvious goal of wanting to sell more cars, they did not know why else they were advertising. If they are ever going to improve as a dealership and reach the sales goals they set for themselves, they need to start by making sure their advertising matches their goals. Otherwise, this dealership is wasting its money on advertising and it is not alone.

If you want to maximize your advertising efforts the first thing that you need to do is to write down your goals, both short-term and long-term. This is the secret to good advertising. It is not the funny commercial or the commercial your advertising agency submits for an award. Good advertising is not about the glitter and the glamour. Good advertising is advertising that accomplishes your goals. It sounds simple because it is simple. So step one is to write down your goals. Then, show it to your managers to make sure they are all in agreement. Lastly, give it to your advertising agency and make it their job to implement the program. But then, don't just forget about it. At the end of each month, review those goals to determine if they were met. If your goals were met, everyone did their job. Now, raise the bar the following month. If your goals were not met, figure out why they were not. If your goals

consistently go without being met, you need to change your personnel or your advertising because one of them is not working.

Determining your goals, however, is not as easy as breaking out a pad of paper and writing. You need to do some research. Start with the information that the factory provides. Your manufacturer supplies you with a great deal of information. Use it. Buy reports. Analyze your competitors' advertising. Look at their creative. Find out how much they are spending on advertising. Do everything in your power to find out what your competition is doing. The more you know, the more you'll make and the better dealer you will become.

Once you have done your research you may find that your competitor in the next county is gaining market share in your county while you are losing market share in his. If your goal is to reverse both these trends, then have your advertising agency design a plan to do exactly that. How do you do that? Let's say that you are in the Los Angeles market. You are in Los Angeles County and the competitor that is hurting your business is in Orange County. If they are taking customers from you, then you can do the same. I suggest a multimedia approach. In this instance, you would have to utilize television. Not only will this gain you customers from Orange County, you will also gain customers from Ventura and

Riverside counties. I would also use radio but to a lesser degree. Radio does not perform as well as television so you want to watch your money. The last two mediums I would utilize are print and outdoor. Even though I would use these mediums on a limited basis, I would certainly utilize them

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in your competitor's county. Be bold about it, too. If you can place a billboard on their lot, then do it and never give it up.

Maybe your goal is to sell more used cars or more new cars. Maybe you want to push a particular model car or a bad credit message. Regardless of the goal, make sure you advertise for that goal and keep your message simple. You certainly would not want to incorporate all of the messages listed above into one message. It would be far too complicated and would cause confusion. The result will be ineffective advertising. You also do not want to create multiple messages that will air or appear in print at the same time. This too will be ineffective. When you set your goal, focus your efforts on obtaining that goal. But even though you want to keep it simple, this does not mean that you cannot have multiple goals. They just have to complement each other. For instance, if your goal is to sell more used cars how do you accomplish that goal? You could decide to do that by advertising for secondary

customers. Now you have two goals that complement each other. Increase your secondary business in order to accomplish the big goal of selling more used cars. If you accomplish one goal the second will fall into place.

In conclusion, if you set goals, advertise to obtain them, and monitor the results, your advertising dollars will be better spent. And, you will have accomplished the main goal that all car dealers have – sell more cars and spend less money on advertising.

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