

Keys to Successful Advertising

Every business owner knows there's nothing better than "word-of-mouth" advertising by satisfied customers. But the reality of life in the world of retailing is that word-of-mouth advertising can't be relied upon to guarantee business success. After all, think of the millions of people who spend money every day at McDonald's or Wal-Mart. We all know these companies and are familiar with their services, yet these corporations spend millions every year on advertising.

Your hobby business can only reach its full potential if every possible customer in your area knows about you and is given a reason to visit your store. That's why advertising is so critical to the success of any independent retailer.

- **Keep a consistent presence** – Sports collectibles are largely an impulsive purchase, so it's important to have your store's advertising message in front of customers as frequently as possible. Make sure your store is always being promoted somehow, somewhere. Even if people don't respond immediately to an ad, over time, you want awareness of your business to be pounded into a potential customer's mind. Repetition is one of the keys to the success of any ad campaign.
- **Put it in your budget** – Keeping a consistent advertising presence will require you to budget your advertising costs just as you would any other business expense. It's far too easy to cut back on advertising when store revenues are down, but that's exactly when you need to be doing all you can to attract additional customers. Make sure there's a percentage of your revenues always devoted to promoting your business.
- **Diversify** – Every retailer has enjoyed success with at least one method of advertising. And while it pays to stick with what works, it can be a mistake to limit your advertising outlets. Think of the advertising messages you receive as a consumer – you don't only notice newspaper ads and ignore radio ads or Yellow Pages ads. You receive advertising messages all day long from a variety of sources, and you pay attention to those that effectively pique your interests. Utilize more than one advertising medium in order to maximize the reach of your advertising message.
- **Ask the experts** – You're expertise in sports collectibles has come from years of daily experience in your profession. Odds are you've spent very little time analyzing the world of marketing and advertising. When it comes time to invest in advertising, utilize the expertise of the ad reps who are soliciting your business. Ask them for information about how to best reach the audience you are targeting. If they are a newspaper, magazine, radio station or TV station, they should be able to provide you with detailed demographic information about their overall audience. Tell them the message you want to send and let them do the creative work for you.
- **Call to action** – Advertising is designed to motivate someone to visit your business and make a purchase. This motivation is referred to in advertising as a "call to action." Yet many advertisements lack a specific call to action, providing customers with little more than the name of the business and its location. Look back at some of your previous advertising messages and look at the ones that worked best, and those that did not draw the type of response you had hoped. Odds are, you'll find the most successful ad campaigns urged customers to take advantage of a specific offer. Themed sales or in-store promotions are perfect events to promote with advertising because they motivate someone to visit your business for a specific purpose. Promoting weekly gaming events, a special sale on autographed memorabilia or informing customers of your next Pack Wars event is an example of creating a call to action for consumers in your ad.
- **Refresh the message** – You have new inventory coming into your store every week, so don't rely on the same advertising message week after week, month after month. Your store offers a variety of products and services, so make sure your ads convey a variety of messages during the course of the year.

• **Explore Co-Op advertising opportunities** – Upper Deck offers Certified Diamond Dealers the opportunity to offset the costs associated with advertising by including Upper Deck product information in the ad. It helps Upper Deck advertise in smaller local markets and helps you advertise your shop at a discounted rate. Follow up with an Upper Deck authorized distributor today for more information on these programs.

The old saying goes that advertising “doesn’t cost, it pays.” You must advertise your business to be successful and making the best choices possible will help guarantee that success.