
your bottom line

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Where Is Bucky Beaver now?

"Brusha, brusha, brusha, new Ipana toothpaste."

If you are over thirty-five, this defunct advertising slogan probably jogs some old, dusty memories. "What ever happened to Bucky Beaver and Ipana," you ask? They're gone from the supermarket shelves because someone at Ipana decided to stop promoting the product. The most dedicated Ipana fans don't even think about what was once their favorite toothpaste anymore.

Ask any business consultant to name the most important factors in achieving success in business. "Good advertising and promotion!" is usually the automatic reply.

Although strategic ad campaigns and effectively planned promotions are major building blocks for success, many independent professional photographers are reluctant to advertise. They often act as if it is unprofessional. Many feel they have only to open their doors, do good work, and business will automatically boom. Well, it won't. Hundreds of destitute and bankrupt studio operators will tell you that. This is the advertising age. No one is immune.

Less than a decade ago, ads placed by doctors and lawyers were considered questionable. I remember my dentist father having to repaint the name on his office door after he realized the letters were a quarter-inch larger than was recommended by the American Dental Association.

Today, doctors and lawyers frequently utilize television and outdoor advertising. One Las Vegas-based plastic surgeon's ads claim he "rebuilds bodies better." Soon we may be seeing billboards sporting slogans like "Dr. Smith's patients live longer!"

Too presumptuous, you say? Too aggressive? Perhaps. Nevertheless, advertising and promotion are vital parts of nearly every successful company in existence today. If you want a profitable business, you must have an effective advertising program.

Good advertising can bring people in-

to your studio. It can control which products your customers buy. It can control how much they spend.

Basically, advertising influences behavior. Consider, for example, a successful ad campaign launched by New York-based Glenbrook Laboratories for Bayer aspirin. "Bayer—the wonder drug that works wonders," say the product's television commercials.

K Mart Corporation's brand aspirin can usually be purchased at one-third the price of Bayer. Bayer touts its product as being 100 percent pure aspirin. K Mart's product also is 100 percent aspirin. So why do so many people buy Bayer when it's more expensive? Because they see Bayer advertised on television. They have never seen anyone on television telling them K Mart aspirin will cure their headaches. So they reach for Bayer and pay the higher price.

A rational mind suggests this is ridiculous behavior. But it happens all the time. People are more willing to buy a portrait from a renowned studio than from an unknown, even though the unknown may be just as good or better. Many portrait customers may feel that a Sears Roebuck & Company portrait, for instance, is better than one created by a master photographer. Sears' popular name and frequent ad campaigns lure thousands of annual portrait customers.

This problem is not restricted to portrait photographers. Young, unknown, commercial photographers often have a difficult time getting their work accepted while recognized "experts" can do no wrong. And when the "experts" make errors, people "ooh" and "aah" about their strokes of creative genius.

Take heed. You can become well known and respected too. But you have to advertise. Few products are easier to promote than professional photography.

First, pick the market segment you want to develop. Then go after it carefully. If you're not good at advertising, hire an advertising agency. It may be expensive, but consider it just another

cost of doing business in today's competitive world.

Commercial photographers should periodically send quality color samples of their work and eye-catching brochures to potential client companies. Personal sales calls to the companies' advertising departments also can benefit these marketing efforts. All photographers should continually publicize their awards and degrees.

Promotions can be expensive, both in dollars and time, but just like ad campaigns, one must consider them investments that will pay dividends, especially for portrait photographers. Most major stores today usually have a sale underway. Why not you? Every major holiday can be an occasion for having a portrait made. So can special community events like graduations, first communions, bar mitzvahs, baseball league victories, and so on. Or you can make your own special events. Perhaps you can cooperate with a popular local radio station and start a grandmother-of-the-week or secretary-of-the-day contest and give away a free 8x10 to each winner. This could be a very inexpensive promotion.

The possibilities are endless. Aim at becoming the Bayer aspirin of photography. It will take time, creativity, and dollars, but if you do your homework, people will automatically think of you first when they need a photographer. And when they come into your studio, they will be prepared to buy your work—even if your prices are a little higher than your competitors'. They assume you must be worth the price because your advertising has told them you are a good photographer. It won't be easy, but it will dramatically improve your bottom line. ■