

INVESTING in QUALITY

The Importance of
Creative Advertising
Content



Investing in Quality

THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATIVE ADVERTISING CONTENT


Investing in advertising is a big decision. That's why it's crucial to ensure you are getting the most out of your advertising dollars. Choosing where you place your media is important, but what your advertising message says is just as important. If you are cutting corners on the creative content of your advertising in an effort to save money, as many small businesses do, you could be selling your business short – and ultimately missing out on market share and sales.




**Why quality creative
is so important**



What creative is



**How you can develop
quality creative that fits
your budget, serves your
needs and achieves
your business goals**



**How quality creative
can help you get better
results from your
advertising**

BRANDING

MARKETING

ADVERTISING

CREATIVE

What's the Difference?

What exactly is “creative,” and what role does it play in the success of a business’s advertising efforts? To get the big picture, it’s important to clarify three related terms that are frequently misunderstood – branding, marketing and advertising.

- **BRANDING** is the process of developing, protecting and promoting your brand. Your brand is the sum of all the elements – logo, trademark, product packaging, customer service and more – that compose the image customers think of when they think of your business. Your brand expresses the essence of your business. When it’s done right, a brand creates an emotional response, like the way you feel when you think about an ice-cold Coca-Cola on a hot summer day.
- **MARKETING** refers to all the actions you take to get your product or service to market, to make prospective customers aware of it and to encourage them to buy from you. You may have heard of the “four P’s” of marketing – product (or service), place (where and how your product or service is sold), price (the value of your product or service to the customer) and promotion (the means by which you convey your marketing message to your target market).
- **ADVERTISING**, which is a key component of marketing, means placing advertisements in various media such as television, radio, print publications and the Internet.
 - **CREATIVE** refers to the elements that make up an advertisement, such as words (whether text or scripted copy), visuals (colors, illustrations, fonts, photos or video) and sound (sound effects or music).

The most important aspect of creative, however, is the overall concept behind the ad. A good creative concept will not only tie in with and reinforce the business’s brand, but also tell a story that makes an emotional connection with the target customer. As a result of this emotional connection, a good creative concept will engage the customer, creating a lasting relationship with the brand and making the ad stand out from the competition’s ads in a memorable way.

Why Good Creative Matters

WHY IS QUALITY CREATIVE SO IMPORTANT TO MAXIMIZING RESULTS FROM YOUR BUSINESS'S AD CAMPAIGN? CONSIDER THESE FACTORS:

- 1 **CREATIVE HAS A STRONG IMPACT ON SALES.** Studies have shown that creative is the single most important factor in the impact of advertising, accounting for 52% of an ad's effect over time.¹
- 2 **ADVERTISING IS NOT AN EXPENSE, BUT AN INVESTMENT IN YOUR BUSINESS.** Small-business owners, managers and marketers who are trying to get the most from their budgets often attempt to economize on the production part of their advertising campaign. In addition, some are tempted by "free production," whether online or even for television.

However, not all creative campaigns are created equal, and you often get what you pay for when it comes to free production. Your business's image is a critical component of your brand and the decision consumers make to interact with your company, so it's important it is effectively represented. Rather than viewing creative as an unnecessary expense that they should strive to limit, small-business owners, managers and marketers must realize that quality advertising is an investment that will pay off many times over.


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Since the 1920s, research has consistently shown that companies that increase or maintain their advertising spending enjoy greater profitability gains than do companies that cut back on advertising. In one study, "aggressive advertisers" saw their revenues rise by 275% between 1980 and 1985 – despite a recession during that time period – compared to firms that cut their advertising expenditures.² You can multiply the return on your advertising investment by investing in good creative. One study found that money invested in highly creative ad campaigns had nearly double the sales impact of money invested in a less

creative ad campaign.³ Quality creative can be repurposed on multiple media platforms, extending the return on investment even further.

- 3 THE QUALITY OF CREATIVE IS AS IMPORTANT TO THE SUCCESS OF A BUSINESS'S AD AS THE ADVERTISING SCHEDULE.** Once you've decided to invest in advertising, it's important to place as much focus on developing the creative as on developing the ad schedule. A business can invest a great deal in a good ad schedule, but executing that schedule with poor-quality creative will negate that investment. In fact, running a poor quality ad can actually do more harm than good.

In one study, 70% of ad campaigns with an above-average creative strategy resulted in above-average execution. However, among campaigns with a below-average creative strategy, 65% resulted in below-average execution. In no cases did campaigns with a below-average creative strategy result in above-average execution.⁴ Quality creative is especially important if your industry or marketplace is highly competitive. If your business is striving for share-of-voice in such a marketplace, poor-quality creative can actually harm the business's image rather than help it. Ultimately, this will give your advertising campaign the opposite of its intended effect.



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- 4 YOUR BUSINESS ONLY GETS ONE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION.** That one impression can determine whether or not a prospect chooses to contact, learn more about or do business with your company. Quality creative that captures the prospect's attention, inspires emotions, and is appealing and memorable will form a strong positive impression of your business.

- 5 PERCEPTION IS REALITY WHEN IT COMES TO ADVERTISING.** If you want your business to be perceived as quality, your marketing message needs to convey quality, too. Good creative is an essential component in conveying a quality business. Conversely, poor-quality creative may convey the message that a business is struggling, is cheap, or offers low-quality products and services.

Good, Better, Best

Now you know why creative is so crucial to advertising success. The good news is that quality creative is attainable for every business, no matter what its budget may be. Let's look at the various ways a small business can achieve quality creative without breaking the bank.

There are different levels of production that your ad can achieve. The level you choose will depend on many factors, including:

YOUR BUDGET	How much do you want to invest in your ad campaign? How much do you need to invest to achieve your goals?
YOUR MESSAGE	What information, brand image and/or specific offer are you seeking to convey with your ad campaign? What is your competitive advantage and how will you make your business stand out from the competition?
YOUR ADVERTISING GOALS	What do you want your ad campaign to achieve? Will the focus of the ads be transactional (driving sales) or building relationships and promoting your brand? How will you measure results?
YOUR TARGET MARKET	What demographic or geographic market do you want to reach with your ad campaign?
YOUR TIME FRAME	How soon does your ad campaign need to begin? How frequently will your ads run and for how long? How many versions of the ad are you going to create?

By taking all of these factors into account, your creative and media partners can help you determine the right level of creative – good, better or best – for your ad campaign. Often, the wisest approach is to develop an ad campaign that incorporates all three levels of creative.

What is the difference between good, better and best when it comes to creative? Remember, creative not only includes words, images and sound, but also includes the concept behind your ad. Therefore, good, better and best ads vary both in terms of artistic value (for example, high production quality and memorable music) and in terms of originality (unique, memorable or unusual concepts).

Good



GOOD CREATIVE WILL TYPICALLY FEATURE THESE ELEMENTS:

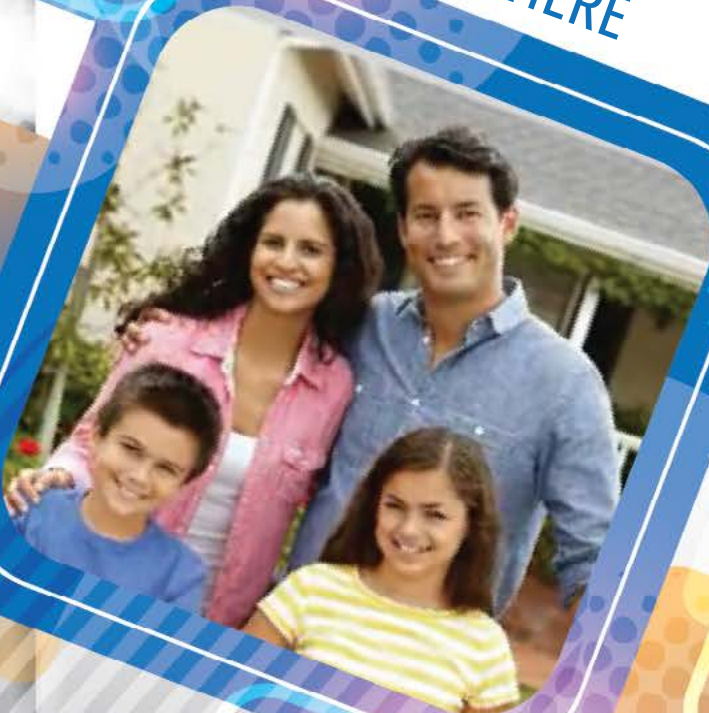
- A simple message;
- Still photos, typically provided by the business or a stock photo house;
- Basic graphics; and
- In-house music and voice-over.

This level of creative is engaging and professional. It alerts prospects to the business's products and services, and may even include a specific offer or "call to action."

Good creative can be very cost-effective and can also be created quickly, making it an excellent solution if you need an ad to run with rapid turnaround time.

However, good creative can't demonstrate moving parts or features, nor does it allow for a creative concept customized to the business's brand.

CLICK HERE



Better

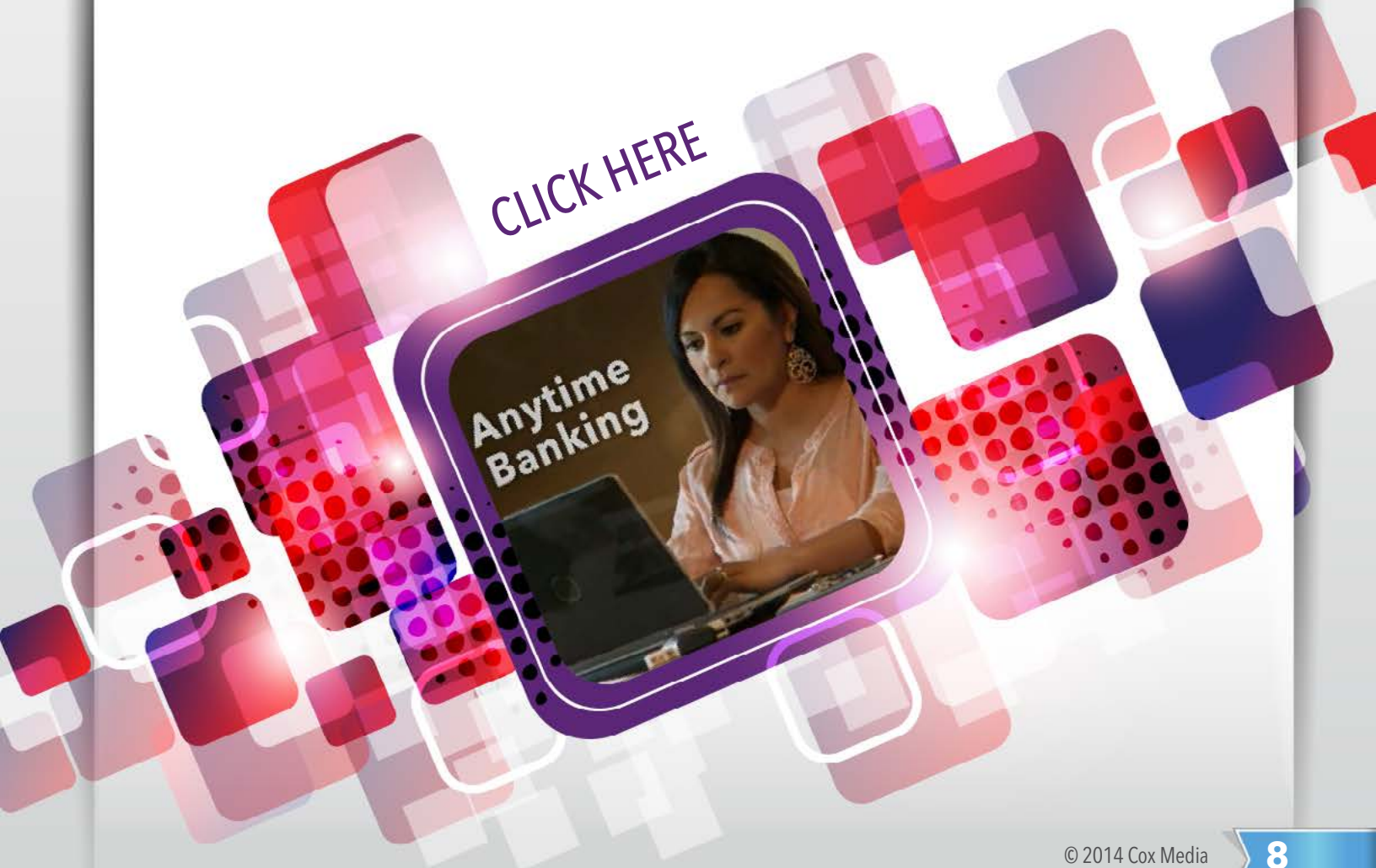


BETTER CREATIVE WILL TYPICALLY FEATURE THESE ELEMENTS:

- A more compelling concept behind the message, such as the use of humor or more advanced storytelling;
- Video, often showing the business's location and employees, but also using stock video;
- More sophisticated graphics; and
- Professional music and voice-over.

Adding video and movement to the ad's creative makes it more engaging than the "good" ad. Creative at this level enables an ad to convey more details about the business, as well as include specific calls to action.

However, this type of ad may look and feel similar to many local ads, making it harder for the ad to stand out among the competition.



Best



THE BEST CREATIVE GOES ABOVE AND BEYOND WHAT IS USED IN “BETTER” CREATIVE.

Specifically, more attention is paid to developing a unique and original creative concept. At the heart of the creative concept are ideas that work across platforms to tell a story – to make viewers feel an emotion.

Consider the “best” example, which you can view below. The copy and the visual story work together to convey the idea that the young man loves his car, and that the bank makes this relationship possible. The commercial is richly produced with careful lighting, but it is the idea that ultimately resonates. The greater sophistication of “best” creative makes such ads more memorable than ads at the other two levels.

Because a “best” ad is typically part of a series of ads, the business has an opportunity to develop variations on a theme, keeping the ad campaign fresh and interesting while still reinforcing the core brand message. For example, your business might develop seasonal ads to take advantage of key times of year, or develop ads that appeal to a variety of target demographics by using slightly different messages.

CLICK HERE



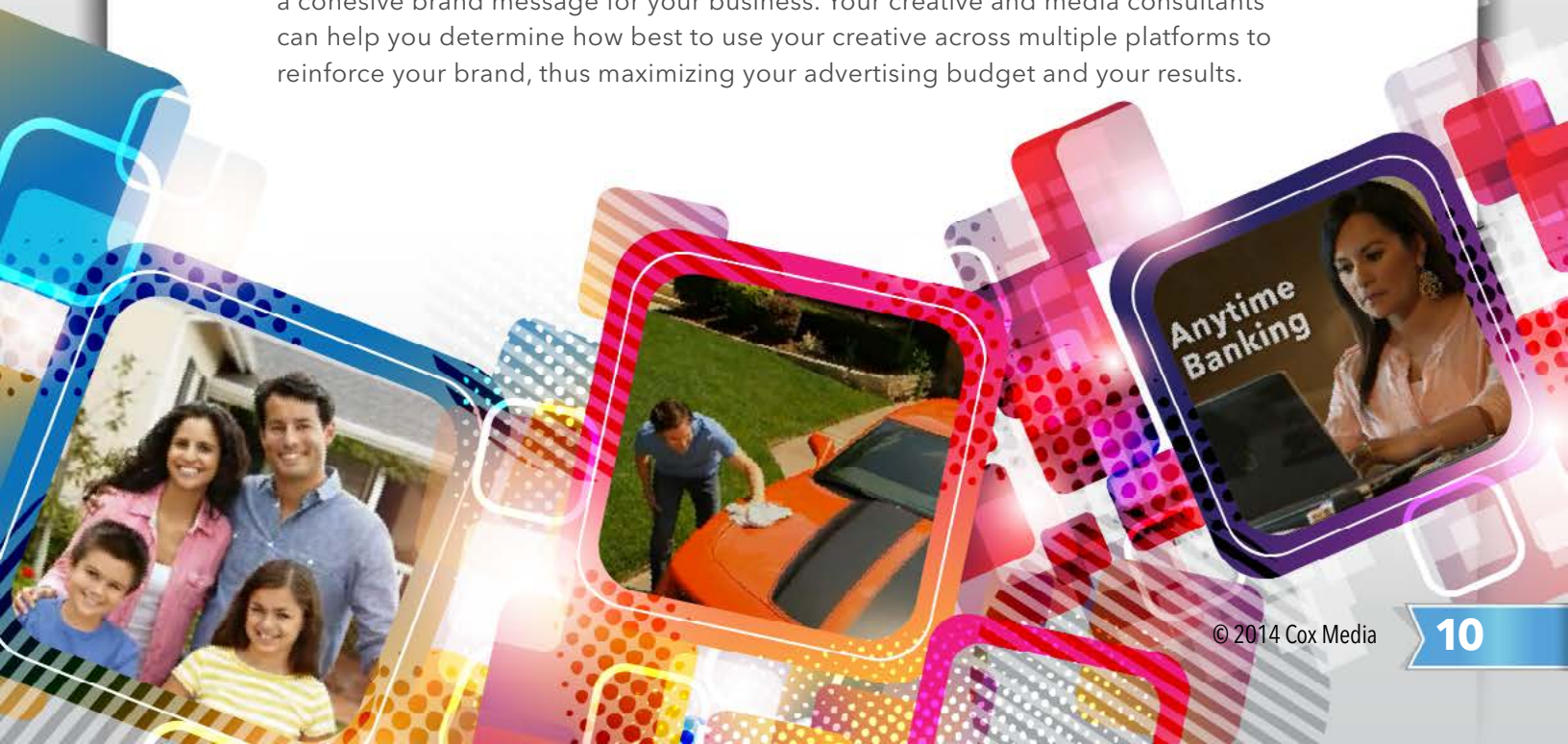
Bringing It All Together

As you work with your creative and media consultants to develop your advertising creative, always keep in mind how you want your business to look to potential customers. What image do you want to portray?

In many cases, your business will get the best return on investment by developing a campaign that incorporates ads at all three levels. For example, suppose you have a new business that is launching its first ad campaign, and you want to convey a message of quality and professionalism. Your creative and media consultants may recommend the following strategy:

- 1 You might develop a “good” ad that is intended to run quickly and get the word out about your products and services immediately. This could also promote a specific event, such as your business’s grand opening.
- 2 You might then follow up with “better” ads that include more specific offers and calls to action. These help build on the awareness generated by your “good” ad, while providing more detail and further enhancing your business image.
- 3 Finally, you might develop a series of “best” ads that will run on an ongoing basis, and are designed to help create and maintain a positive perception of your brand. Building your brand helps keep your business top-of-mind when prospective customers are searching for the types of products or services you sell, and develops lasting relationships with customers.

Once your business has developed quality creative, it can and should be repurposed across a variety of advertising platforms. In fact, doing so is a smart way to drive home a cohesive brand message for your business. Your creative and media consultants can help you determine how best to use your creative across multiple platforms to reinforce your brand, thus maximizing your advertising budget and your results.



Conclusion

Once you have decided to invest in advertising your business, make the most of your return on that investment by investing in your creative, too. **Smart business owners pay as much attention to the quality of their creative as to**

their ad schedule. Trying to save money by skimping on creative can hurt your

business's image – and its sales – in the long run. Instead, partner with

your creative production team to take advantage of their expertise. Share with them your goals for your business and your advertising campaign.

They can help you develop quality creative that fits your budget, builds your business's brand, and helps your business thrive and grow.



Resources

¹ comScore ARS Research Highlights Importance of Advertising Creative in Building Brand Sales, http://www.comscore.com/Insights/Press_Releases/2010/10/comScore_ARS_Research_Highlights_Importance_of_Advertising_Creative_in_Building_Brand_Sales

² Laboratory of Advertising Performance Report 5262, McGraw-Hill Research, <http://printinthemix.com/Fastfacts/Show/128>.

³ Creativity in Advertising: When It Works and When It Doesn't, Werner Reinartz and Peter Saffert, Harvard Business Review, <http://hbr.org/2013/06/creativity-in-advertising-when-it-works-and-when-it-doesnt/ar/1>

⁴ comScore ARS Research Highlights Importance of Advertising Creative in Building Brand Sales, http://www.comscore.com/Insights/Press_Releases/2010/10/comScore_ARS_Research_Highlights_Importance_of_Advertising_Creative_in_Building_Brand_Sales

About

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