

Title:

Yellow Page Advertising For Lawyers - Where Have All The Calls Gone?

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Summary:

I get calls every week from lawyers saying they're not getting calls anymore from yellow page advertising. Having done quite well in the past, they're afraid to discontinue the advertising. They want to know what's going on and what to do.

Apparently, lawyers are not the only ones. In his article "Quit wasting money on Yellow Page advertising" by Peter Fernandez, D.C., a yellow page, print advertising and practice management consultant for chiropractors, Dr. Fernandez answ...

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Article Body:

I get calls every week from lawyers saying they're not getting calls anymore from yellow page advertising. Having done quite well in the past, they're afraid to discontinue the advertising. They want to know what's going on and what to do.

Apparently, lawyers are not the only ones. In his article "Quit wasting money on Yellow Page advertising" by Peter Fernandez, D.C., a yellow page, print advertising and practice management consultant for chiropractors, Dr. Fernandez answers the question, "Why has advertising in the Yellow Pages changed from one of the best ways to advertise to one of the worst in just a few years?" (See 1, below)

This article will attempt to explain where all the calls went. I believe lawyers began advertising in the Yellow Pages much earlier than on TV because of the cost; most lawyers were reluctant to become pioneers of TV advertising; and lawyers were pursued by yellow page salespeople, but not by TV salespeople. Since 1976 through the mid-1980s, the Yellow Pages and classified newspaper ads were virtually the only place a potential client could find a lawyer advertising. Consequently, lawyers advertising in the Yellow Pages did not have much competition and had very good results.

Many more lawyers flocked to the Yellow Pages which then became very crowded. In the last few years, and after a few pioneers, many of the lawyers advertising in the Yellow Pages discovered what every other business has long known, that TV is by far both the most effective and cost-effective media. According to TNS Media Intelligence/CMR, from January 2004 through September 2004 lawyers have spent \$287.3 million on TV compared with only \$71.3 million on print media, \$11.4 million on radio and \$4.1 million on Internet advertising. According to research done by the Television Bureau of Advertising, the public's perception of television gets the votes for Most Authoritative and Most Exciting. Both influential and persuasive, TV wins over other media, in both categories, by a wide margin among Adults 18+. TV scores 81.8% in the Most Influential category, with newspapers a distant second at 8.5%. TV scores 66.8% Most Persuasive with newspapers, again a distant second at 14.2%.

Just as buying something wholesale or in large quantities, your cost per person reached from advertising is reduced when you buy media that reaches more people. Broadcast TV reaches many times more people than a county-wide yellow page book and therefore costs much less per person reached. In the New York DMA (broadcast TV market), there are 29 counties reached by TV. If there was only one yellow page book in each county, you would have to advertise in 29 yellow page books to reach the same geographic area as TV. Unfortunately, there are several yellow page books in each county. Smaller community yellow page books produce even less of a return on investment because they reach even fewer people. Many lawyers have found out that for the cost of a full-page advertisement in just two county-wide yellow page books, you can advertise on TV with a respectable budget and reach the population of an entire DMA.

Today, due to the large number of lawyers advertising on TV, potential clients are being diverted away from yellow page books. Additionally, in the field of personal injury, the problem is compounded. Seriously injured people are usually in bed in a hospital or at home watching TV. Lawyers advertising on TV reach potential accident clients long before they can even get to yellow page books.

When lawyers first began advertising, there was only one yellow page book. Now there are commonly three, four or even five county-wide yellow page books and several village, community or neighborhood yellow page books as well. Some advertisers have even lost their position in the Yellow Pages because they signed a contract with another yellow page book not realizing it was a different book and they couldn't afford two books. Because a consumer will typically keep one yellow page book and throw out the others, the question an advertiser faces is which yellow page book to advertise in or to advertise in all of them. Will your advertisement be in a yellow page book that's thrown in the garbage? I keep

only one book and it stays in the closet, rarely used. Today, I use the Internet instead of a yellow page book.

While there was once only one Yellow Page book in town receiving 100% of yellow page advertising revenue, they are now losing a large share of that revenue to several competing yellow page books, but their operating costs remain fixed. All of the yellow page book companies must print and distribute the same number of books. Unless all advertisers advertise in all three yellow page books, the publishing companies have to increase advertising fees thereby increasing the cost of reaching a yellow page consumer. In an effort to increase revenue, yellow page books have even begun creating new real estate to sell including advertising on the covers, spine, tabbed pages and even Post-it Notes style ads. These high visibility advertisements also divert yellow page consumers from regular full-page advertisements.

Simply put, there was once only one yellow page book in town; it was cheaper to advertise in; there were fewer lawyers advertising in the book; there were few lawyers advertising on TV; the Internet was not what it is today; and there were far more people using the Yellow Pages than there are today.

So what's a lawyer to do with yellow page advertising? If you're one of the three or four largest advertisers in your market with an advertising budget large enough for a substantial TV advertising campaign including billboards and radio, you may want to consider advertising in all of the yellow page books. If you're not one of the largest advertisers in your market, my suggestion is to discontinue advertising in yellow page books and to spend your money on TV. If you have a 1-800 vanity telephone number available and extra money in the budget, you should also advertise on billboards and radio.

1 <http://www.worldchiropracticalliance.org/tcj/1997/feb/feb1997fernandez.htm>