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# AD SALES 101

**GOOD SALES PEOPLE** know that the best way to build positive client relationships is to make sure their clients know how to get the best out of the magazine—and the most out of their advertising dollar. There’s a big difference between taking an order or describing a magazine and selling advertising.

## PROSPECTING

The first step to selling advertising is prospecting. Who are the advertisers that should be in your magazine? Scouring the competition, checking websites, even asking current advertisers who their competition is can all generate leads—leads that become prospects once they have been qualified. Prospects should then be prioritized so that you can focus your time on the best ones, digging deeper down the list as top prospects are converted to advertisers.

Prospecting isn’t just about building a list of potential advertisers to call, it also lets you see who is advertising what and where. This background knowledge can help you develop a strategy to get the business before you even contact the prospect. For example, if a prospect is running full-page ads in other publications, then you want to sell them full-page ads in yours. If they run those ads in three issues, then you want the same or more. This is the beginning of a media plan.

The next step is to see how your magazine compares to your competition—what can you do that they don’t? How can your schedule work with theirs to extend the advertiser’s campaign? What are the benefits of reaching your readers? Can you offer them online advertising as well?

## WHAT’S YOUR MEDIA PLAN?

Having a media plan in mind before contacting the client helps you to guide the sales process by allowing you to educate the client, manage their expectations and make recommendations that will add value to the money they spend in your magazine. And, of course, any recommendation has to be based on multiple insertions because, with the exception of announcement ads, we all know that one ad doesn’t get results.

It’s best for the client and for the magazine if advertisers book campaigns of no fewer than three insertions—that’s why there are frequency discounts on a rate card. Educating the client about other benefits of running a campaign can help sell it.

## CAMPAIGNS

When an advertiser books a campaign of multiple insertions, it allows you to map out future issues and develop better flow in the magazine by moving ads around. For example, if a client buys four ads you know that you can give them prime positioning in two is-

ues by putting their ads in the first third of the book, another in the second third and one at the back of the book. If a client only books one ad there is very little motivation to give them prime positioning when they haven’t committed more business to you.

## LATE AD SUBMISSIONS

Late ad bookings have always been the bane of magazine publishing, but good sales people know how to help smooth out this problem. While no one wants to turn away business, late ad submissions are a headache for production and printers and put unnecessary stress on staff.

Sales people should have a real feel for which advertisers will commit to buying space and which ones won’t. Is the client nearly there and just needs more time or are they leading you on? Are they really going to advertise or are they giving you the runaround? Sometimes it is hard to tell, so magazines will often build a little post-deadline space into an issue by blocking in house ads or public service ads that can be pulled late in the game should a paid advertiser want the space.

This is a great solution to accommodate the occasional late booking, but it’s not a practical one if you’re holding more than a few pages past the closing date in hopes that advertisers will commit.

You can discourage last-minute bookings by educating advertisers on how booking early gives you more flexibility to get them better positioning in the magazine. For example, you can make sure that they are adjacent to editorial, placed far from their competitors, or on a page with complimentary advertisers. Coming in late means that there are fewer options and they get what they get, including the risk of having more errors in their creative as there is little time to check the ad properly. If they want the best that you can do for them, they shouldn’t wait to commit until the last minute.

## INCENTIVES

Sometimes incentives can be used to encourage early and multiple ad bookings. If clients need a nudge, you could offer them a cover at the page rate, free distribution of their brochure at a trade show, an increase in their online presence—if they confirm by deadline and commit to a campaign. Free ad space is not an incentive. It’s a giveaway that will only train your advertisers that your space has little value and that if they hold out long enough they won’t have to pay rate card prices. Try to stick to incentives that don’t cost you much, if anything, but have a real value to the client.

As a sales person, it’s your job to guide the sale, be actively involved in the selling process and to show the client how to get the best out of the magazine—the advantages of running campaigns, of booking by deadline, etc.—without compromising the integrity of the publication. This is how strong relationships are built.

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