



ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

While the quantity and kind of advertising differs from firm to firm, the reasons for real estate advertising are universal. Good advertising gets the name of the firm into the public eye and mind, helps create goodwill and prestige, leads to listings, attracts prospects, helps market specific properties and informs the public about real estate.

Although any and all of these objectives could be accomplished through personal contact, advertising is the most efficient and effective way to get the job done.

SCOPE OF ADVERTISING PROGRAM

In most residential real estate firms, the largest percentage of the company dollar is spent on advertising. In a small office advertising may be limited to For Sale signs, classified ads and occasional direct mailings prepared by salespeople or the broker. A large, departmentalized firm is likely to employ a wide range of media and may either have its own advertising department or retain an advertising agency to handle the work. No matter what size the firm or how much money is spent, it is important that all salespeople know about the campaign so they can tell clients what is being done on their behalf.

TWO KINDS OF ADVERTISING

Real estate advertising can be divided into two categories: marketing and institutional. Marketing advertising, aimed at obtaining listings and finding buyers, consists of classified and display ads in print media to promote specific properties, radio and television commercials, direct mail and outdoor advertising.

Institutional ads, which also use display ads, commercials, direct mail and outdoor advertising, put the firm's name before the public and explain the services it offers or the philosophy of the real estate business. This kind of advertising promotes the name of the firm, tells the public about the quality of the firm's operation and reinforces logo recognition.

The primary difference between these two kinds of advertising is the purpose for which they are used. If an ad is used primarily to promote the firm's reputation, the advertising is generally institutional. When it is geared toward attracting buyers and sellers it is usually considered marketing advertising. However, marketing advertising will also have



some institutional impact if it repeats and reinforces the public's recognition of the firm's name and logo.

CONSISTENCY IN ADVERTISING

Logos, slogans and company colors convey your company's image whether they appear on For Sale signs, stationery, direct-mail pieces, premium giveaways or in classified and institutional ads. Changes should be made with great care and should not be made too frequently else they interrupt the continuity of the message. People inside a company tire of a theme or program long before it has made its maximum impact in the marketplace.

EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS OF ADVERTISING

Most firms follow regular routines to measure response to their classified and display ads and then use these data to determine the program's effectiveness. Each time someone calls or comes into the office, the salesperson or office staff member asks how he came to contact the firm. If it is in response to an ad, the client is asked the name of the newspaper or radio or TV station and the date of the ad. By keeping this and other written records the broker and the sales staff know which media generate action and which days of the week ads pull the best response.

It is more difficult to measure the effectiveness of institutional campaigns. The REALTOR, his salespeople and office staff have to keep attuned to public reaction to advertising that does not draw a measurable response.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Classified newspaper ads are the REALTOR's most common advertising tool. A good classified ad serves a variety of purposes.

- Brings buyers to a broker who has properties to sell
- Helps the broker obtain more listings
- Builds familiarity with a real estate firm
- Keeps firm's name in the public eye
- Stimulates word of mouth advertising
- Promotes individuals when their names appear in ads
- Increases staff loyalty and pride in the firm
- Helps persuade people with down payment money to spend it on real estate



- Tells the public the range of services a firm has to offer
- Helps persuade sellers your firm can market property better than he can

Writing Classified Ads

Since the listing salesperson is most familiar with the property to be advertised, it is up to him to describe the property whether he writes the ad or someone else takes the information from him. Whoever writes the ads, it is important that the style conforms to the firm's image and the ongoing advertising program.

The classified ad should not tell the whole story but should leave some question or curiosity in the reader's mind so he will want to inquire further. If the ad tells a reader everything he wants to know about a property, chances are he may not call. When you omit certain essential information intentionally or use a technical term to describe a property's unique feature, inquiries are generated.

When you write ad copy, the major objective is to create a visually appealing ad with good descriptive copy that embodies the points you would make if you were selling the prospect in person.

Some Do's

Collect all the facts. Once you are well acquainted with the property, think about what it has to offer the different members of a family, a person living alone or someone who wants to use it as a business investment. Then write the ad.

Get the main benefits in the first five to eight words. Start with the headline. It should dominate the ad and highlight the single most salable feature - location, view, price, emotional appeal, architecture, condition or size.

Your ad should be bold, dramatic and original. The 12 most persuasive words in the English language, as determined by a group of researchers at Yale, are: save, need, easy, discovery, money, results, safety, proven, you, health, love and guarantee.

Make the body copy easy to read. Don't keep a buyer guessing. Give specific details about the number and kind of rooms, age of house, extras, aesthetic features, neighborhood, schools, transportation, outdoor and recreation areas and terms. Appealing adjectives and colorful word pictures provide sizzle.



A Newspaper Advertising Bureau survey of people planning to move indicates that each home buyer has one lifestyle element as his primary deciding factor. The most popular ones are spaciousness, a showplace, good place for children, solid comfort, easy maintenance, safe neighborhood, ease of commuting, privacy, place to swim or keep fit, lots of conveniences nearby, push-button living (inside is most important) and natural surroundings (outside is most important).

Ask for action. Make it easy for the prospect to respond. Create a clincher that stimulates the reader to do something positive like call your office or attend an open house. Give your firm prominent identification. Provide readers with an easy-to-spot phone number, address, office hours or even directions to your office (or the property advertised if it's an open house).

Plan a good layout. Let the headline stand apart from the rest of the copy. If you list more than one property, leave a little open space between each one. Be truthful.

Some Don'ts

Don't use vague generalities, worn out phrases and too many superlatives.

Don't use too many abbreviations. They make an ad look more like a puzzle than an invitation to buy.

Don't use headlines that tease or bully. It could turn readers away.

Don't paint an untrue picture. It will destroy your credibility with a prospect who comes to look at the property.

There are, of course, many more techniques to good classified advertising. Study all the real estate classifieds in your papers and decide what makes a good ad and why.

If you write ads, one of your most important business contacts will be the classified reps of the papers your firm uses. In many cases these people are excellent sources of tips on wording, type size, style and other ad techniques. They can be a great help to salespeople who never thought they would be writing ad copy.



DISPLAY ADVERTISING

The big plus in display advertising is the use of pictures, showing what a REALTOR®'s best properties look like. Word descriptions under the pictures may not be complete, but since most people are basically interested in looking at the property pictured, a brief description sometimes helps. If it leaves several questions unanswered in the reader's mind, it can generate a call for more information.

Display ads can be used to describe several properties even when only one is illustrated.

DIRECT MAIL

Small firms find direct-mail campaigns particularly effective in telling their market audience about properties they have for sale, whether residential or commercial investment. When possible, the mailing piece should provide a place for a salesperson's signature or a pocket for a business card enclosure to lend a personal touch. The best direct mail pieces include a return coupon or card by which the recipient can indicate further interest in the promotion; a record of responses provide the firm a measure of the effectiveness of the program.

Direct-mail brochures are often quite effective in selling commercial-investment property. The brochure describes only one property; but if that property is worth a half million dollars and the brochure helps sell it, the money has been well invested. Such a mailing would be directed to a carefully developed list of private investors, syndicators, corporate investors and others chosen for their natural interest in a specific property.

INSTITUTIONAL CLASSIFIED

Classified ads can carry a firm's institutional message by brief mention of special services the firm has available, worded to generate phone inquiries for details.

An editorial column advertisement is effective when done well. Written by a REALTOR or a member of his staff or agency, it looks like a regular news feature or other editorial column except that it must be marked "Advertisement" or "Paid Advertisement". Such a column can feature tips on investment real estate, the climate of the local real estate market, suggestions on buying and selling homes and other real estate topics. Regardless of the content, the fact that the column appears regularly with the firm's name on it (and perhaps a picture of the person who signs it) adds to the REALTOR®'s advertising



impact. But it must be produced by someone who writes and can meet a regular deadline. The cost of such a lengthy, regular feature may be high, but in many instances the return in sales and goodwill more than compensate for the dollar spent.

RADIO AND TELEVISION

Though the initial cost is high, electronic media ads often bring results equal to newspaper classifieds at the same time they serve a strong institutional purpose. Effective radio and television advertising requires special competence in both choosing outlets and preparation of text and visuals. Firms using these media should get the best professional counsel available.

SIGNS AND BILLBOARDS

Your firm's For Sale and Sold signs serve as strong institutional advertisements, telling the local public how active you are in the marketplace. Colors, typeface and design are important.

Signs should carry a minimum of text. Their visual strength is in a good logo, the identifying mark of your company.

Billboards also keep the firm's name in the public eye. Giant versions of small property signs, they literally shout the firm's name and logo to people as they drive by. There is a rule of thumb that billboard text should be limited to not more than five words which can be read in four seconds. A costly form of advertising, billboards require the services of an ad agency for both design and placement. They are used most frequently to advertise a residential development or commercial-industrial complex. Some large firms now use them in an institutional way in large cities, keeping their name in the public eye. Smaller versions of outdoor ads are used in public transportation spaces - airport corridors, buses and trains. Some taxi companies sell display ad space inside their cabs. These display ads not only catch the eye of local people but also get a firm's name before newcomers quickly.

TRUTH IN LENDING

The provisions of the Truth in Lending Act of 1969 are important in all kinds of advertising. Anyone in a real estate firm directly or indirectly responsible for advertising should be completely familiar with the Act.



Basically, the law restricts the language that can be used in advertising relating to terms of purchase or financing. A REALTOR can advertise the annual percentage rate but not the pure interest rate or he can avoid mentioning any financing terms in his advertisement. Your broker will advise you how his advertising program conforms to the Act.

PUBLIC RELATIONS, PROMOTION & PUBLICITY

Public respect, goodwill and faith in your firm must be earned. Everything every member of the firm does becomes part of its public relations, creating an image that cannot be bought. Good public relations are "deeds first, words last". Implied in this is the public's trust in the firm, its people and its ethics and concern for the well-being of its clients.

How can a salesperson engender the respect, goodwill and faith of the public he serves? He can carry out the firm's policy by both actions and words.

Actions include everything from a positive attitude to the job, the firm and the community he is selling. Enthusiasm for the job includes being on time and doing what you promised. Positive thinking about the firm can be conveyed all through the working day as you let people know you believe you are working with the best company in the business.

Belief in the community begins with the job and carries through to devoting some free time to taking part in business, civic, service or other organizations that need help and support.

Promotion and publicity are the "last words" of public relations. The firm promotes its public image when it publicizes the addition of new salespeople to the staff, the achievement of individual or company goals or the opening of a new office. Promotion includes helping a worthy cause or project succeed in taking an ad in a benefit program, lending window space to publicize a project, donating a float in the town parade or perhaps providing balloons for everybody who attends.

Promotion and publicity are bound only by what the company can do in good taste within the limits of its budget.

There are other things real estate firms can do that are a combination of promotion, public relations and what amounts to institutional advertising.



Working with news media people is one. Most newspapers, radio and television stations have a reporter assigned to cover real estate news in the local market. While you as a salesperson may not be assigned to work with these reporters, you can help your broker identify possible news stories to suggest them.

Some REALTORS encourage their staff people to get acquainted with reporters and editors, knowing that it pays to be a reliable source of real estate news and facts. Media news people and real estate professionals share a common interest in promoting the attractiveness of a town or market area as a good place to live and/or work.

Radio talk shows offer another unique opportunity to cooperate. Some shows have a guest discussing his area of expertise with the host and accepting telephone queries from the listening audience. Such exposure is a fine way to widen the public's acquaintance with your name and your firm.

Listen to these shows and become familiar with their format. Then list several suggestions for real estate topics you believe would interest their audience. Call the show's producer for an appointment and tell him briefly why you think real estate would be a good topic for his show. The producer may accept any of your good ideas or may ask you to develop one you had not thought of yet. Cooperate. It could be the beginning of a profitable relationship.