
MODERN TRANSIT MARKETING III: *HOW TO MAKE IT WORK*

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Some of the most frequently asked questions in marketing are

How should I allocate my marketing budget—

—between radio, TV, newspapers, direct mail, and other media?

—between creative, production, and media?

—between advertising, public relations, and special events?

The answer is— **It depends.**

It depends on the following elements of your marketing plan:

1. Your goals (ridership, awareness, familiarity, public support);
2. Your target market(s);
3. Your strategies for achieving those goals including **branding** and **positioning**;
4. How far you are from achieving your goals.

A marketing budget in the range of three to seven percent of the operating budget is recommended for a transit system. A budget in the higher range is recommended if a new service is being launched or substantial growth is desired; a budget on the smaller side is often sufficient to keep the status quo for a mature system.

Building an effective transit marketing program is similar to building a house. The *Mission, Vision, and Values* of the organization form the foundation (See *Modern Transit Marketing Part I – How to Get Started*). *Strategies* are equivalent to the frame and give shape and focus to your marketing plan (See *Modern Transit Marketing Part II – How to Pull it Together*). *Tactics and Programs* make up the walls and roof. It is the *part* of your marketing plan that the public and stakeholders actually *see, hear, touch, and feel*.

Tactics and programs implement your marketing plan. Tactics are the message (what you say), media (how you deliver the message to the customer), and the *look & feel* (mood, tone, and image). Programs consist of campaigns developed using your marketing strategies and complementary tactics.

The first step in determining which tactics to implement is understanding the current mindset of your audience. This is accomplished through quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (focus groups) market research.

MEDIA SELECTION

Media is the delivery person of your marketing message. It must make a persuasive advertising sales call on the prospective customer. Available types of media include—

1. Print (newspapers, magazines, directories, newsletters),
2. Broadcast (radio and television including cable),

3. Out-of-home (billboards, public posters, movie theater ads, skywriting)
4. Direct mail (flyers, postcards, letters, mailed brochures)
5. New media (websites, internet banner ads).
6. Event marketing
7. Public Relations

The media mix is the combination of media to be used in a marketing program. Industry research reveals that in today's increasingly complex media world, the choice of media can have a major impact on how the audience receives and responds to a commercial message. It is the consumer who controls where, when, and under what circumstances he or she pays attention to media advertising. The strengths of each individual media must be considered in terms of its ability to reach the target audience **with the desired impact**.

The qualities inherent to a type of media can be used to good advantage for the message. The chart below summarizes how effectively various media types achieve certain purposes:

	AWARENESS	INFORMATION	EXCITEMENT	INFLUENCE	PRICE
PRINT	Weak	Excellent	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Excellent
BROADCAST	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Excellent	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
OUT-OF-HOME	Excellent	Weak	Satisfactory	Weak	Weak
DIRECT MAIL	Excellent	Excellent	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
NEW MEDIA	Weak	Excellent	Weak	Weak	Satisfactory
EVENT MARKETING	Satisfactory	Weak	Excellent	Satisfactory	Weak
PUBLIC RELATIONS	Satisfactory	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Weak

Yet, even within the media types, the effect can vary. For example, to project permanence and reliability, magazines are *excellent* while newspapers are *weak*. The qualities inherent to a type of media can be used to enhance a message and should be selected to enhance your marketing strategies.

Budget is also another consideration in selecting your media. Frequency (the number of times your message will reach the same person in a given time period) is what makes marketing work. It is better to reach fewer people more times than more people fewer times. Generally speaking, a prospect in your target market must be exposed to your message seven (7) times before he or she begins to pay attention. Frequency requires budget.

MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Crafting an effective marketing message is critical to the success of your marketing program. The message consists of both the written copy and the visual images. A creative message with impact is often equal to multiplying your frequency. Below are five simple rules to add impact to your marketing message:

1. Your message should be **consistent** throughout all your marketing materials. Having well developed marketing strategies will help you maintain a consistent message. Tag lines and slogans can also be effective mechanisms.

2. Your message should focus on the **benefit** the potential customer will realize. Too often we focus our advertising on what we want the customer to know rather than what the customer wants and needs from his or her perspective.
3. Facts must **support** the benefits you claim. Do not make unsubstantiated claims. Marketing pieces must be frank, direct, and believable to be effective.
4. The marketing message should be **unpredictable**. Predictable advertising is boring and will not get your audience's attention. Curiosity and news can stimulate the potential customer to learn more. However, creativity that is not channeled to delivering your message may be entertaining, but it will not increase ridership or public support.
5. Keep it **positive**. A marketing message that speaks to the fear or discomfort invokes negative images and emotions, which may, in turn, become linked with your service.



This Award winning Billboard was one element of a successful multimedia campaign for a transit operator using outdoor advertising, magazine, and radio. Notice how it takes advantage of the five rules for message development.

MARKETING CALENDAR

The final step in implementing your marketing plan is to develop a marketing calendar that shows each campaign and program by time period and allocates your marketing budget accordingly.

By using tactics that support and enhance your marketing strategies, you will be able to develop a marketing plan that will have a quantifiable impact on ridership and public support of your transit service.

*This is the third of a series of four articles on marketing your transit service. Next issue will include the fourth in the series, **Modern Transit Marketing IV: How to Measure it**, which will explain how to determine how effective your marketing plan is at achieving your objectives.*