

# Spend and grow

When business is slow and money is tight, the first thing to go is often marketing and advertising. But that's short-sighted thinking. In a study of U.S. recessions, McGraw-Hill Research analyzed 600 companies from 1980–1985. The results showed that business-to-business firms that maintained or increased their advertising expenditures during the 1981–1982 recession averaged significantly higher sales growth, both during the recession and for the following three years, than those that eliminated or decreased advertising. By 1985, sales of companies that were aggressive recession advertisers had risen 256% over those that didn't keep up their advertising.

A few suggestions, with a nod to advertising and PR executive Ed. Clark and The Clark Company ([www.clarkadspr.com/aboutus/default.html](http://www.clarkadspr.com/aboutus/default.html)):

- Increase your advertising budget. When you increase your spending, you increase your share of voice. If

- *Advertisers enjoy much greater sales numbers*
- *Keep your voice in your community*
- *Use web to print everything from cards to T-shirts*
- *Take full advantage of the Internet*
- *Web advertising effective in downturn*

your competitors cut back, your message grows even stronger.

- Develop a strategic marketing plan. Don't waste money advertising the wrong message in the wrong place to the wrong audience.

- More for less. Take advantage of softer rates and special promotions.

- Start sponsoring. This will give your business valuable exposure to targeted, core audiences.

- Talk to your customers. You know who your loyal customers are. Keep in touch with them and let them know what you have to offer.

- Maintain continuity to sustain awareness. Advertising works cumulatively, so you have to remind people frequently about your brand, or they'll forget you.

- Public relations. Be sure to maintain a media presence with smart, effective PR programs.

- Don't "skimp" on creative or production costs. Your customers will notice and worry about quality. This is a time to stress quality and value.

## Look at your options

There are some great options out there. Let me give you a few examples:

- Web to print. Businesses operating many outlets and branches often find it challenging to execute marketing and sales print materials that are uniform in appearance (maintaining brand integrity), can be rapidly designed and are cost efficient. Web to print is the ability to have an Intranet or Internet web interface that allows employees to order anything from business cards to direct mail to a company shirt. For in-

stance, a manager of the Chicago office could order a direct mail campaign from the web to print site while, at the same time, the manager of the Baltimore branch is ordering logoed shirts for the warehouse workers from the same site.

Individual managers control costs. The system tells them exactly what products and quantities are available and at what price they are being produced. The only way a job moves forward is with a manager's sign off.

Using Web to print can save you time and money. It centralizes all of your marketing materials in one place, you'll have less inventory to store, and print runs can be very small, so there is much less waste.

**With the right advertising tactics, a downturn can actually provide opportunities for online marketers. Now, more than ever, customers are relying on the Internet to help them make the best purchase decisions during tight times.**

- SEM (search engine marketing). Are you taking full advantage of the Internet? Google Adwords is the first step in any good marketing campaign. Why? You get what you pay for, and you're not locked into a contract. When a customer is looking for a new wholesaler their first step is to research it online; 85% do that research on Google. Are you there? Do you have a presence on page 1? With SEM you only pay when viewers click on your ad/link. And, most important, you can set up a daily spend, so you'll never go over budget, and you can cancel at any time. If you are not utilizing SEM, you should; it's in-



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expensive and easy to set up.

With the right advertising tactics, a downturn can actually provide opportunities for online marketers. Now, more than ever, customers are relying on the Internet to help them

make the best purchase decisions during tight times. Our work with AdWords has consistently been one of the most efficient, targeted ways to reach customers where they're researching — online.

As Henry Ford so eloquently stated, "A man who stops advertising to save money, is like a man who stops the clock to save time."

In the coming months, we'll explore other efficient marketing tools that will help your company grow in a soft market. ■

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