

## Set aside some money to build your image.

Advertising is critical for the success of almost every business. There are two types of ads: call-to-action and image.

Most entrepreneurs use the call-to-action to get people into their business. A typical call-to-action would be a “20 percent off” sale or a coupon. It is pretty easy to track especially when the customer brings in the coupon.

Image advertising is much more difficult to evaluate, but it’s still important. The purpose of an image ad is to raise consumer awareness of the product or service you provide. Just look at what car dealers, financial institutions, communications companies and restaurants do with their advertising. TV has a ton of image ads.

But don’t expect a direct response from image advertising. In the same way wearing clean, pressed clothes or wrinkled, dirty ones affects your personal image, image advertising sets the tone and impression of your business.

Frequently, image ads are called “**branding**,” because they are promoting the brand and not the business. Probably the best example of branding is Nike’s “swoosh.”

The heart of branding is that the advertised message is true, is clearly directed to the public and runs repeatedly. Branding really represents the essence of the company. Apple expresses liberty regained; Pepsi, youthfulness; Oil of Olay, timeless beauty; Saturn, the American competitive spirit; and AT&T, the promises of the future.

People have needs for specific products or services—such as carpet cleaning, pest control, jewelry, banking— and when they need those products or services, you want them to think of you first.

Studies have shown that, to be effective, an image ad must be seen at least seven times. Image ads are just reminders telling people “not to forget” the brand.

Verizon spent more than \$300 million to change its branding from Bell Atlantic. It had to spend this money to convince consumers that it was a credible company. However, most companies cannot afford to spend \$300 million on pure image advertising. A good rule of thumb is that you ought to be spending about 10 percent of your advertising on image ads **(your total advertising budget should be about 5 percent of annual gross revenue in retail or consumer products, and 3 percent of business-to-business)**.

Image advertising is most effective in publications that target your message to a specific audience, such as a specific income level.

In the same way that you guard your personal reputation in your community, you should also guard or promote your company’s “image” by investing in image advertising on a regular basis.

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