

Six ways to make a good impression on an advertiser

By JOHN FOUST

There's a lot of truth in the old saying, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

Yes, it is possible to impress an advertiser by sharing your knowledge of readership studies, demographics and advertising principles. But facts and figures will take you only so far in building solid client relationships.

Let's take a look at six ways to show advertisers you honestly care about them and their businesses:

- 1. Respect their time.** Show up on time (or better yet, a few minutes early) for appointments. Return calls and e-mails promptly. To be late without notice is inexcusable. If you are get caught in a traffic delay, call to let them know.
- 2. Get to know the gatekeeper.** You will be wise to cultivate your relationship with the gatekeeper, because (1) that is the person who has daily access to your primary contact, and (2) he or she can keep you posted on relevant developments in the office. Always be courteous, express appreciation for help, and – if appropriate – make note of important birthdays.
- 3. Be an idea machine.** Sales people have a tendency to present ideas when they're making a pitch for new business or when they're promoting special advertising products. The problem with this approach is that it makes it look like you'll put on your thinking cap only when you're asking for money.

One way to set yourself apart from the competition is to constantly look for ways to help your advertisers get better results from their existing budgets. Think beyond spec ads. Present new marketing strategies and tactics that you believe will help accomplish specific goals.

- 4. Don't make every call a sales call.** Rapport goes beyond sales presentations. You're in trouble if you call or visit an advertiser and hear, "What are you trying to sell this time?"

It's smart to show your genuine interest by staying in touch just to say "hello," share interesting news about a hobby of theirs, or to extend congratulations for special accomplishments. Building rapport can build sales. People like to do business with people they like.

- 5. Find a way to say "yes."** When an advertiser asks about something that is out of your area, be careful about saying "no." It's better to say, "Yes, I'll look into that for you." A common example is the advertiser who asks you to arrange positive news coverage. Instead of saying "that's not my job" or "company policy prevents that," thank them for their interest and offer to provide information on your paper's press release protocol.

- 6. Create ads that work.** This is the most powerful tool in your relationship-building toolbox. When a client's ads are getting positive results, he or she will have a positive opinion of you and your paper. Your calls will be welcomed. Your e-mails will be answered. And your ideas will be given serious consideration. After enough successful campaigns, you will no longer be seen as a media representative or a sales person. You will be a marketing partner.