

## Phone book pitfalls

*Think twice about where you spend your advertising dollars*

by Scott Orth, Director Internet Marketing Services, GTS

With few exceptions, the glass industry has fallen behind the marketing curve. We still allow phone books to dominate our marketing budget, and most of us spend little to nothing on the Internet.

The biggest problem with phone books is that you pay \$2,000, \$5,000, maybe even \$10,000 a month for your ad to appear in a thick directory that often lies buried in a closet.

Would you pay for a billboard ad if it had a tarp over it most of the day? Or a radio ad that's mostly broadcast on a deserted island? Or a truck-side ad, if the truck was parked in a remote parking garage? Of course not. So, why pay for an ad that is buried in a book that almost no one uses? I ask customers that question every day, and the typical answer is: "That's what we've been doing for 20 years, and it works."

How do you know it works? Is it because you attract new customers or because you're still in business? For the most part, you can't track the effectiveness of phone book advertising. If you've successfully done so, you're one of a select few that can prove a phone book ad is worth its cost.

### Online phone books

Even online phone book advertising doesn't provide as much value as a

properly designed and marketed company Web site.

For example, one of my clients was paying \$3 per click for an online phone book, pay-per-click ad. They were getting leads, so they figured it was working until we pointed out the following:

- They were paying \$3 per click even on their own brand name. Their brand name should already come up at the top of the free listings, so this was wasted money.
- The average cost-per-click for their terms was only \$1.50, but they were paying \$3 per click, on top of service fees.
- The phone book company duplicated the client's Web site under one of its own domain names so it looked like the client's site but with a unique phone number.

Using a micro-site, or separate Web page, for specific marketing targets is a perfectly good strategy. Placing a unique phone number on this landing page also lets you track offline conversions. In addition, the unique landing page allows for specific tracking of traffic from the PPC campaign.

However, it also hinders your ability to rank high in the free listings because the duplicate content is seen as spam and can pull your site down to a lower ranking. In this situation, the phone book company focused on the pay-

per-click aspect of the campaign and neglected to tell the client it was duplicating the client's Web site on its own domain. As a result, the client had to pay for its brand name because the phone book company knocked it out of its top free listing.

In defense of online phone books: They're selling a real service. They just don't know how to do it right, and in some cases, they're doing more damage online than good.

As for the printed book, I can see why you'd be afraid to pull out altogether. In some smaller markets, phone book ads might still have value. However, trim down that full-page ad for something smaller and put money into your Web site and online marketing. The rewards will be worth the change.