

50% of Yellow Page Directory Users are Looking for Just One Thing

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By Dr. Lynella Grant

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Directory Users Seek Information about Location First People who open the Yellow Pages already have a desire to buy. That sets it apart from all other advertising media. For a brief time, the eager-to-buy directory user checks the competition, to see what each of them offers. They scan for solutions that satisfy their needs. Readers hope to find ads that leap out from the rest, and will simplify their choice.

So they ignore any ad that doesn't match what they're looking for. And the piece of information that fully half of them look for first is the location of the business. Buyers want to know how easy it is for them to get there. Businesses that are too far away are eliminated. So their ads aren't even read.

Convenience is the preliminary deciding factor. As readers scan through the heading, they mentally delete: too far..., too far..., don't know where that is (so no)....

After Sorting by Location, Then they Read the Ads The selected ads are then studied in more detail. Not until that point, does the information in the ad actually get read or considered. Aside from location, when directory users are in the "information gathering phase," they're looking for many different kinds of answers, like hours, payment methods, and brands offered (which differ according to heading). They're being educated by what they read in the ads. They gain a clearer idea about their options and who provides it (you being just one).

Directory users don't want to drag that step out. So it's up to your ad to jump to the front of their brain with a clear indication that you offer exactly what they're looking for. Look-alike ads just make readers work harder to uncover what they want to find.

There's no need to overcomplicate the matter. The test of a good Yellow Page ad is its ability to generate calls. You don't have to be a graphic designer or a marketing whiz to prepare an effective ad. You just have to know your customers well enough to know how they think and what they want. You

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need to be able to signal to them that you've got what they're looking for.

The Ad Sells the Call or Next Step Some ads prompt directory readers to pick up the phone and call one or more of the listed businesses. Callers often continue down their short (close) list until they can find enough of a reason to pick one.

Yellow Page industry studies show the average number of calls a user makes is 5.3. An advertiser doesn't have to be the first choice, as long as it's among the few chosen for a call or visit. At that point, the business owner's ability to field questions or "sell" is more influential than the published directory information. After the potential buyer closes the directory, its work is done. They've move on – one step closer to a purchase.

Location Defines Who Your Competition Is The Small Business Administration states that distance is a major factor as to who comes to buy from you. The average independent store draws the majority of its

customers from not more than a quarter of a mile away. The average chain store draws most of customers from less than three-quarters of a mile away. For the average shopping center, that figure is four miles. Service business have different distances.

Many kinds of business really only need to worry about competitors within their immediate area. You don't have to beat out every other business in the heading. Compare your ad to those competitors within four miles, and make sure your ad is more prominent or enticing than theirs.

Some of the biggest, high-powered ads ahead of yours simply won't be called because they're inconvenient. You need to know where your customers come from, and how far they're willing to travel for you. Here's where knowing their specific mindset and priorities pays off. Ask them; take a survey.

You don't need a big ad if you are the only game in town, or in a very small heading. Directory users can't help but see you. Buyers are likely to call everyone who looks appropriate, if there are only a few. So you'll get called anyway – as long as you're listed.

Unless a business has the biggest and best ad, most of the money spent for display ads is wasted. That sad truth applies to most of the business headings. Cut through the prevailing misinformation, and learn what makes a Yellow Page ad effective at Yellow Page Sage –

Location Matters on the Internet, Too Already, 25% of online searchers are looking for information about business location. And that percentage is increasing. Most customers prefer to spend their money close to home – it's more convenient. But rather than consult the printed Yellow Page directory, they search online. Searchers add additional terms like zip code, city, and region to narrow their search. This strategy is called "local search." It's a boon for connecting buyers and local businesses. Because location really does matter to buyers.

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Dr. Lynella Grant is an expert in visual communication, how printed materials send signals that reinforce or negate the verbal message. Decode and repair your unintended impressions. Author, "The Business Card Book" and "Yellow Page Smarts."

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Combine Your Yellow Page Ad and Web Site for Maximum Profits

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A Yellow Page Ad isn't Enough Any More

An unquestioned "must" for any small business has been to run an ad in the Yellow Page Directory. Since most customers were local, that was enough to establish itself as "open for business." The annual Yellow Page ad represents the largest promotional expense for many enterprises.

Yet, Yellow Page directory use is declining, while expanding segments of the public don't rely on them at all. Yellow Page advertising costs keep going up, and the complicated pricing structure is difficult to figure out.

Worse yet, having a Yellow Page ad doesn't deliver like it used to. People can find most of the information they want without ever opening a directory. Your business needs its Yellow Page strategy to be in tune with the times and your market.

Like most business owners, you must squeeze maximum value from every promotional dollar spent. That requires you to move beyond treating a Yellow Page ad like it's a separate, stand-alone way to promote your business. It's not. Your Yellow Page advertising needs to work in tandem with all the rest of the efforts you pursue.

The Internet Expands Your Arena

Every business needs to put itself in front of the people looking for what it does – and that's not just through the Yellow Pages any longer. An increasing percentage of customers, who spend their money close to home, are Internet savvy. There's a major overlap between Yellow Page directory users and Internet users. That fact supports integrating your local and Internet promotional methods so they attract more new customers.

Yellow Page users are likely to be Internet users as well. And a business that ignores online activities entirely may have a tough time getting access to or credibility with those customers. It is possible to make online and traditional (offline) methods to attract customers work in tandem – improving the effectiveness of each alone. So it's no longer an either-or, all-or-none choice whether to promote the business online or off.

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People who subscribe to online services consult the Yellow Pages 23% more often than non-subscribers.

Frequent Yellow Page Users are: 18% more likely than average to be Internet subscribers 32% more likely to be among the heaviest Internet users 18% more likely to make purchases on the Internet 27% more likely to spend more than \$1,000 on Internet purchases

Source: Simmons

Customer Behavior is Changing

More and more, people are going to the Internet to find, learn about, or select products and services. Even local ones. That doesn't mean that they will buy online, however. People still prefer to spend their money locally when they can. But, even the smallest business can do a better job of being found by those who prefer to use both the Internet and the Yellow Page directory to make their buying decisions. And, it can be done very inexpensively, too.

Even a 100% local business can pull in more business by getting its low-tech and high-tech advertising to mesh. Visit

for lots of free practical assistance. As you broaden

your visibility to buyers, your business will be found more often – by the very people you've been looking for.

What Else has Changed? Buyers are less trusting and more willing to shop around Customers have more options and ways to find what they want Availability of Internet Yellow Pages Aging population uses the Yellow Pages differently than young people Development of unique niches and specialties More choices for a "better deal" More directories competing in a geographic area More immigrants, or those from other cultures, unaccustomed to Yellow Page use Area code proliferation fragments cities Larger cities have multiple directories, rather than one large one Development of specialized directories – like ethnic, non-English, women, minority, business to business

Become Visible Online – With or Without Your Own Web Site

If your business already has a Web site, treat it as a way to expand the reach of your Yellow Page ad and traditional marketing activities. Jettison the expectation that it should make sales – few do so. But an information-packed Web site can support your traditional marketing methods very well.

Even without your own Web site, your small business can establish an online identity that helps buyers to find you. Get listed in a variety of Internet Yellow Page (IYP) directories Send emails to your "regulars" with special offers and useful information Position yourself for Local Search – a method whereby customers use search engines to locate local businesses by town, state, region, zip code, etc.

Expand the exposure of your business beyond your Yellow Page ad through a Yellow Page strategy

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that reaches the whole globe. Your operation, whatever its size, will gain more credibility and traffic locally when it puts itself in the bigger picture.

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