

MARKETING LIMELIGHT

Yellow Pages Coupons: Right for Your Site?

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02/01/2007

Yellow Pages representatives employed directly by the publisher will try selling you as many ad products as possible, including coupon space. It's likely your rep will try to sell you on the value of coupons, but be wary. Little or no data exists to prove how well coupons deliver new customers. The responsibility is on you, the customer, to test the worth of coupons to your facility's location.

Request the opportunity to test the success of coupon advertising at minimal additional cost for at least the first year. You may discover coupons work well for your site and this breed of marketing is a good investment.

Creating Coupons

Here are tips for buying, designing and building success into your Yellow Pages coupons:

- Be specific in your offer, i.e., \$15 off first month's rent.
- State the conditions: new customers only; limited to certain unit sizes.
- Print an expiration date on the coupon; most practical is the same date the directory expires.
- Be sure your display ad in the regular "Storage" heading indicates that you offer a coupon; use a color icon if available to make it noticeable.
- When buying more than one coupon, print the words "one coupon per customer," and, if applicable, "not valid with any other offer."
- Track all your coupons: Keep them or record redemptions so you can evaluate the success of the program.
- If buying coupons in more than one directory, print a code on each version so you can track their performance.
- Include a small map on coupons to make it easy for customers to find you; it's a subtle way to show concern for their convenience.

Online Advantage

Coupons can also be offered through Internet Yellow Pages. If you've purchased a listing on an IYP site, and have hyperlinks leading to a map or your website (or even your Yellow Pages ad), consider adding one that says "coupon" or "special," if possible. The extra link provides two advantages. First, it will likely

give you higher placement than some competitors. Second, letting customers know you have special offers gives you a leg up on the guys down the street.

Some Internet Yellow Page sites offer a special option for an icon that reads “coupon” and hyperlinks to it. Others may have a hyperlink on “details,” with details in parentheses. In that case, make sure you include info about your special offer. Just be sure that if your link indicates a “special,” you follow through with a deal.

Occasionally, an advertiser indicates a special as one of the “details” but when you visit the site and click on the word “special,” a message pops up stating: “No specials currently available” or “Come back again for future specials.” Making that mistake will alienate prospective customers so fast that they will run, not walk, to the nearest competitor.

Negotiations

If you’re game to try out Yellow Pages coupons, just remember to negotiate rates. First ask for the cost of the display ad, and start negotiating from there. That way, you can suggest the coupon option yourself and know whether or not you’re really getting a good deal.

Coupon advertising can be a valuable venture if explored properly. Try it out, but track it. If it works, buy it again. If it doesn’t, rule it out and take a shot at other marketing mediums.

Sue Weinman, senior account executive, represents the Yellow Pages Division of The Michaels/Wilder Group, an advertising agency that specializes in Yellow Pages, Internet and recruitment advertising. Based in Phoenix, the award-winning firm works with hundreds of self-storage owners and managers. For more information, call 800.423.6468; visit www.michaelswilder.com.

The Coupon Advantage

In a directory where the “Storage” heading is particularly crowded, the coupon gives you an additional place to advertise—if the price is right. If you buy more than one coupon, such as a full or half page of coupons, you can offer different specials to attract different customers. For example: Fourth month free after three months of renting appeals to long-term renters; or free lock or move-in truck with rental might draw newcomers.

The coupons have staying power: It’s less likely it will be lost or tossed when it’s attached to the directory customers keep for a year.