

Advertising in a Time of Crisis



By Paul Weyland

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Many broadcast facilities around the country are having problems with advertisers who do not want to run spots in the days following the events that occurred in our country on September 11th.

In most cases, the advertiser's concern is that the public would perceive them as opportunistic or "money-grubbing". Local broadcasters report many advertisers canceling schedules because of this perception. There are three logical steps to handling this problem.

First, we should remind our clients that the goal of the terrorists was to completely incapacitate our way of life. By failing to move on with "business as usual" and just letting our economy grind to a halt, aren't we submitting to their cowardly wishes?

Second, we should remind our clients that now is the perfect time to establish the perception that they are **COMMUNITY LEADERS** in the minds of our audience.

Our advertisers should take positions of community involvement by purchasing schedules and advising viewers and listeners of where to go to donate blood, clothing, money and canned food if needed. Or, advertisers could donate percentages of profit to victim relief funds. Or our advertisers could simply take the position that they completely support the decisions that our government is making to handle this crisis.

Third, we should run supportive announcements spots twice per hour that suggest the following:

THIS STATION HAS PROVIDED YOU WITH CONTINUOUS, COMMERCIAL-FREE COVERAGE OF THE TRAGIC EVENTS FROM THE SEPTEMBER 11TH ATTACK ON AMERICA FOR _____ DAYS. PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THIS STATION'S ONLY SOURCE OF REVENUE IS OUR VALUABLE ADVERTISING CLIENTELE. PLEASE SUPPORT OUR ADVERTISERS SO THAT WE CAN CONTINUE TO PROVIDE YOU WITH COMMERCIAL-FREE COVERAGE WHEN THE SITUATION WARRANTS.

Remember that we must continuously remind our clients that we are in the business of building the largest audiences possible for them. That's the reason we're in the business of broadcasting.

The unfortunate events of September 11th have caused an unprecedented increase in radio listening and television viewing. It would be a shame to stop advertising just because more people happen to be watching and listening to our stations.

Keep in mind that despite the crisis, our economy will move on. Our listeners and viewers will continue to buy toothpaste, food, automobiles, cellular phones, etc. from somebody this week. But how can they buy from our advertisers if our audience doesn't know who they are, what they're doing or how to get in touch with them?

Price gouging is opportunism. Carrying on business as usual and advertising that you are still open is not. Continuing to advertise at this time is just good logic and it proves that terrorism cannot and will not shut down the economy of our great nation.