

## *INvertising: More Powerful Than Advertising?*

Everybody knows Bruce.

Bruce (not his real name) faithfully opens the doors to his business at 9 am each day. His shelves are stocked, his mix of merchandise is right, his signage is excellent, and everything seems to be in place for success.

Bruce also advertises. He uses a blend of media to remind customers of who he is, what he does, and where he's located. Bruce appears to be in control.

But when a potential customer calls or walks in, Bruce's control is lost. He depends on his staff to come through in delivering what people expect. If Bruce is advertising a "friendly, knowledgeable staff," for example, will the clerk actually be friendly and knowledgeable? Maybe. Maybe not.

Bruce may be missing a key ingredient in his success formula. Andy Corbus and I call it "INvertising", and we believe it's so important that we're writing a book about it.

By definition, advertising is the external promotion of a business to potential consumers. We define INvertising as the *internal* promotion of a business to those people in charge of fulfilling its advertised promises. A good INvertising program is a process of staff education that covers:

- the overall core business philosophy;
- the different ways in which the products or services benefit the end user;
- preferred sales and customer service techniques; and
- information on the shorter-term, time-sensitive offers and specials being advertised to the public.

Have you ever gone into a business that promised a certain experience, only to be disappointed with that experience when you were there? There's a disconnect between what was promised and what was delivered. Good INvertising can close that gap.

Let's say Bruce hasn't had time to fully educate his staff about the philosophy of the company, the words to use in specific customer situations, or to even tell his staff about his newspaper ad. A customer walks in and says, "I'd like the special I saw in the paper last night." What will Bruce's counter person likely say?

- A) "What special?"
- B) "They don't tell me anything around here."
- C) Blank stare
- D) "I don't read the paper."
- E) "Sure. How many can I get for you?"

You spend a lot of time crafting just the right message for your advertising. But if you don't develop and train the right story for your staff, they'll create one of their own.

The way we see it, you have two jobs to do: to create advertising that works, and to create a system by which your *employees* are also "sold", where everyone learns what's being advertised, what the sales goals are (if any), what part they play in achieving the goal (if any), and the ultimate reward the team will receive for reaching the goal (if any).

Why would you want to do both? Because together, this system—selling the outside through advertising and “selling the inside” through INvertising -- is a powerful combination that allows a small business owner to compete and win against larger, more formidable competitors.

It's message development on two distinct and separate levels. And the good news is that ***you're*** in charge.

Andy and I are speaking to a big group about this very subject this month. Next month, I'll let you know how it went, and how you can begin to put a system like this to work.

Sorry, Bruce. Just hang on a little longer.

*Bill Guertin, Chief Enthusiasm Officer of The 800-Pound Gorilla, works with companies of all sizes to improve their service skills, image and profitability.*