

Dead Art

MAB announce photo winners in Commons

The Memorial Awareness Board (MAB) took the opportunity of what has become an annual reception in the House of Commons this month (11 November) to announce the winners of a consumer photography competition it ran this year.

Called Dead Art, the competition invited photographs of old and new memorials. MAB says competition was stiff, but the judges chose the entries of Noel Taylor of Barry Island, Wales, as

the winner with Alex Jones of Manor Park, London, runner-up.

The judges said of the winning entry: "His images tell a story. And this is what I think pictures should do."

The competition was an innovation this year in the MAB campaign to promote the idea of using stone memorials to commemorate the passing of lives and to raise awareness of memorialisation issues in the United Kingdom.



The winning 'now' and 'then' pictures entered by Noel Taylor in the MAB photographic competition.

The competition was sponsored by SLR Photography and Bridge Insurance. The winner received £1,000 and the runner-up will join Shannon Robinson of SLR Photography in her studio for a day.



Marketing

Alan Gayle is a sales and marketing consultant specialising in the construction industry. In this column he offers advice on how to make an impact in the market you want to reach. This time he looks at Advertising.

Advertising. Where should you advertise? How much should you spend? Does it work? The short answer to the last question is: "Yes, it does work". But with a little thought you can improve the impact of your advertisements.

For most contractors, suppliers and professionals, advertising can be a useful part of the Marketing Plan, so I thought I'd pass on a few simple tips I've learned that will help improve your advertising.

The first thing you should know is that advertising usually has a cumulative effect, so one advertisement will have less impact than a series. It's also most effective when it's part of a bigger plan with other activity, especially promotions and PR.

Repetition creates familiarity and familiarity creates trust. In the building industry, trust and confidence in your company and its products and services are extremely valuable commodities.

There are two types of advertising: 'direct response advertising' and 'corporate advertising'. When you see ads from huge companies like BP or British Airways that promote the company but not a specific product, that's corporate advertising. For most

small businesses it's unnecessary. Direct response advertising, where the advert has a specific 'call to action' (CTA) – asking the reader to do something specific – is far more effective. For example, the CTA for a stone supplier could be 'Contact us for samples'. Even better is a time-limited CTA to advertise your promotions: 'Call us for 10% off Portuguese limestone tiles – this month only'.

A few more quick pointers for you:

- **Positioning.** It's generally accepted that an advert on the right-hand page will have more impact than the same ad on the left-hand page. When booking your adverts ask for a right-hand page as close to the front of the publication as possible.
- **Photography.** Images are used a lot in the construction industry, so you're target audience will be used to seeking out images that relate to their project or can solve their problems. Be sure to use high quality photography that will create a visual impact. Snap shots on your mobile phone just won't do it.
- **Headline.** Many marketing experts say the most important element of an effective ad is the headline. Make it short, (ideally less than

than 10 words), original, memorable if possible and just one idea. Some people think the skills of the mason have been consigned to history, so a possible headline for conservation work, say, backed by appropriate photographs, might be: 'Lost skills? Who says'.

- **Layout.** The layout of the advertisement is important. Many a company director has an 'artistic' wife, child or friend who they fondly believe can put together an effective ad. They probably can't. Use a graphic designer or ad agency to make sure it looks professional and will get the attention of your target audience.
- **Cost.** Don't just place the ad in the publication that has the lowest price – there is normally a reason why they are cheap. Choose a publication that reaches the audience you want to reach. It may cost you more but it will be a lot better value than paying to reach an audience that doesn't buy your product/service.

There are loads of small companies in the construction industry that don't put enough time or thought into their advertising. If your ads are professional and well targeted, you'll



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build your reputation and get better results. You'll also differentiate your company from the mass of mediocrity competing for your target audience's attention.

For some great construction marketing ideas, check out Mark Buchshon's aptly named Construction Marketing Ideas blog <http://www.constructionmarketingideas.com/>