

# Cheap Design is Expensive

I was contacted recently by a business owner who wanted to place an ad in a magazine with a looming deadline. The owner said he wanted me to just resize an old ad and wasn't interested in making any changes. Upon further questioning, it appeared that the old ad had not been effective, but since another publication had put it together for him for free, he felt he could get some more mileage out of it.



I tried to explain that putting little thought into the content and look of an expensive display ad would make the ad basically useless, but he wasn't having any of it. He insisted that the important thing was to have a presence in the magazine and that the ad's message was adequate.

He seemed to think that readers would just somehow "get" what his business was all about and that they would know what to do (even though the ad had no call to action). He felt that spending money on the content and appearance of the ad was a waste, and I should just resize it and be done. Since I have an allergy to selling people useless stuff, I passed on the job.

This experience is not unique. Everyone who has ever been in business has had to deal with customers who are overly focused on price, and the design and marketing professions are no different. This is especially true in an ailing economy – customers tend to focus on the bottom line because it feels like they live and die by it.

But, as we know, *it is a mistake to bring a short-term focus to a long-term challenge*, and that is what happens when make-do patches are applied to marketing tools. Re-using something that didn't work the first time just wastes resources that would be better applied to finding a real solution that supports business goals over the long term. And other businesses have their versions of this. If you are an accountant, it's "Cheap accounting is expensive," and if you are a mechanic, it's "Cheap repairs are expensive."

***Your investment in expensive ad space, printing and web development will be wasted if budget resources are not first used for developing message and design. Get your strategic content in place, and you will receive a much better return on those investments.***