

Are print ads passé...or do they still bring in buyers?



"IN OUR MARKET, WE OWN DAILY PRINT ADVERTISING."

Rex Solomon, president
Houston Jewelry
Houston



"WE WANT TO BE WHERE PEOPLE ARE PAYING ATTENTION."

Donald Smith, co-president, marketing
E.M. Smith Jewelers
Chillicothe, Ohio

THE PAPER CHASE: Our approach to print advertising changed in 2008 when we wanted to promote our gold buying. In December of that year, we placed an ad for gold buying and told the newspaper rep to call the next month. The response was favorable, and we've been advertising in the daily ever since. Our main independent competitor has stopped daily advertising—as have many retailers in our market.

OUT OF PRINT: There are so many ways to get news these days via cable news. Only traditional newspaper readers are reading the paper, a big audience. Five to seven years ago we had three to four [print ads] a week. We only advertise in newspapers for special events. In recent years we've moved down mainly to Christmas, but last December I ran zero ads in the paper.

SANTA ROCKS!
FINE DIAMOND STUDS
FROM \$195.00 - \$250,000.00
HOUSTON'S FINEST SELECTION
OF ON SITE LOOSE DIAMONDS
OPEN UNTIL 8:00 TONIGHT!

**SANTA SAVES
AT
HOUSTON
JEWELRY
& Fine Gifts**

HOLIDAY HOURS
MONDAY - THURSDAY 10:30 - 8:00
FRIDAY - SATURDAY 10:00 - 8:00
SUNDAY 10:30 - 7:00

8521 WESTHEIMER 713-764-1000 www.HoustonJewelry.com

A Houston Jewelry holiday ad

IF YOU PRINT IT, THEY WILL COME: In addition to frequency and consistency, print advertising must have a sense of urgency and a call to action. For the last two years, we've run a single 1/4-page ad on our one-day, after-Christmas sale when all jewelry is 75 percent off. We've done \$250,000 in sales both years. People understand when there is a real deal and will respond.

SUPER BOWL SCORE: This year we held a Super Bowl party. We put a 1/4-page ad in the local paper promoting our one-day, 70 percent off all jewelry sale. As luck would have it, Super Bowl Sunday landed on Feb. 7—the week before Valentine's Day. We did \$30,000 with 25 transactions that day. To put it in perspective, the Saturday before the party we had a \$5,000 day.

INTELLIGENT DESIGN: A light-colored font on a black background is more eye-catching. The logo is always in the same place, and page placement is almost always right-hand position above the fold. And I always have a catchy headline. Humor appeals to men who buy jewelry for their wives and girlfriends.

THE DIRECT (MAIL) APPROACH: At the end of November we hold a trunk show. Handwritten and hand-stamped invitations are sent out. If you make the message stealth and present it in a way that has a high perceived value, you'll get a better response.

TV, ONLINE, AND BEYOND: About 70 percent of my promotional budget is dedicated to print. But we are paying attention to other media. We have some new TV ads that reinforce our message—they've even won some Telly Awards. That content is transferred to YouTube and Facebook, which helps people find Houston Jewelry on popular search engines and adds rich content to my social media websites.

MAKING CONTACT: For the last two to three years we've been focusing on data mining. The more current and detailed the database, the better we can use tools such as Constant Contact with e-mails, video e-mails, and e-newsletters. Facebook has become huge for us, with nearly 6,000 fans. The key is keeping it light and fun. I've even taken on an animated-character persona: "Big Donny," a big brown bear.

THE TECH EFFECT: The neat thing about this new technology is that it levels the playing field. You don't have to have a lot of money to compete for you. But you always have to be looking for the latest technology. If you can keep up, there are many business growth opportunities.

MILESTONE MOMENTS: One direct mail campaign we won't give up on is our birthday and anniversary cards with \$50 gift cards. Each month it costs us \$1,500 in printing and mailing costs, or roughly \$1.50 each. On average, 50 percent of the cards are redeemed. Everyone wants to be in our database to receive our offers.

FEWER ADS = MORE PROFITS: This year I've gone cold turkey on print, including print, TV, and radio. Normally we spend about 5 to 7 percent of our budget on advertising. At this point of the year, I've spent less than half the amount by summer. From February to May this year, we've saved \$100,000, a 10 percent reduction compared with the same period last year.



E.M. Smith's birthday and anniversary cards