

KEEP SENDING OUT THE SIGNALS

BY DAVID POWELL

“TIMES ARE TOUGH, but you must keep getting your message out there.”

That’s the rallying cry from the head of marketing at one of Ireland’s leading digital TV, broadband and home phone service providers.

Rhona Bradshaw of Chorus Ntl says that now is the time that companies can make their mark, and establish a lasting competitive advantage.

“Now is definitely a good time to advertise,” she says. “Not only is there better value in the market but a lot of companies can make themselves heard much easier because their competitors have maybe gone a little quiet.”

“It’s the companies that continue to spend – rather than those that stay quiet – that will come through these difficult times in the best shape,” adds Bradshaw.

It’s an argument that is certainly doing the rounds. But in a country that’s been more battered than most by the unravelling economic crisis, there may not be a huge appetite for a ‘spend spend spend’ mantra.

Nonetheless, the evidence does show that cutting marketing and advertis-

ing budgets during a recession is like to result in a long term drop in sales, market share and profitability.

By the same token, companies that take a deep breath and maintain their marketing strategy can come through the difficult times stronger than ever.

Not that 2009 has been too difficult for Chorus Ntl. The company’s ‘Triple Play’ offering of TV, broadband and telephone is going down a storm with the thousands of consumers for whom staying at home, as the saying goes, is the new go in g out.



Home entertainment a ‘necessity’

“It has been a good year,” says Chorus Ntl’s Rhona Bradshaw. “Our motto is to ‘show value’ and people are responding to that. It also helps that home entertainment has become a ‘necessity’ in most homes, almost as essential as gas or electricity.”

“But we’re not sitting on our laurels and waiting for the customers to come to us – we’re getting out there amongst them through our marketing.”

“Newspapers have always worked extremely well for us,” says Bradshaw. “We’ve done the quarter-page ads, the half-pages, concentrating on all the titles where our customers are likely to be.”

Targeting ability of press

“That ability to target is one of the key strengths of press for us, we can take the 25-44 year olds – our ‘bullseye audience’ – and ask ‘Okay, what are they reading?’ then put together a package aimed specifically at them.”

“We’re using a lot of press inserts at the moment, and these give us an opportunity to hit our customers with a broad range of information in an environment that they’re comfortable and familiar with,” she says.

Voted best internet service provider at the Irish Digital Media Awards for the past two years, Chorus Ntl operates in one of Ireland’s growth sectors and Bradshaw – unlike many marketing chiefs around the country – admits that if 2010 is anything like 2009, she’ll be happy.

“We’re growing, the sector is growing, and I’m definitely looking forward to the next few years,” she says. “Then again, I’m an optimist!”

Chorus Ntl’s marketing chief, Rhona Bradshaw: “Our motto is to ‘show value’ and people are responding to that.”

Record readership for Irish newspapers

A record 3.1 million people or 88% of the adult population are now regular newspaper readers, according to the influential JNRS report for 2008/09.

The research also shows that newspapers attracted an impressive 64,000 new readers in the past 12 months alone.

Frank Cullen of National Newspapers of Ireland (NNI) said the report was “a good news story for newspapers at a tough time”.

“When it comes to news coverage, people are looking for more than sound-bites,” Cullen went on. “They want the range, coverage and convenience that only newspapers can provide.”

Report highlights “deep insight” of newspapers

Meanwhile, one of the key strengths of newspapers has been highlighted in a major new report by global giant PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

The report, based on surveys of 5000 people in seven countries, found that newspaper readers place a high value on the “deep insight and analysis” provided by journalists.

“People still choose the newspaper as their main source for news and background information,” said Marieke Van der Donk, author of the report.