The message remains the problem

By Gareth Richards

Fears of a recession have a definite impact on people’s buying habits, says Lyn Jones marketing manager of INM Outdoor.

“Where money is tight, people automatically put off buying high-ticket items or shop more cleverly. The products they will buy are the ones with the greatest top-of-mind awareness and perceived to be the best value. In tough times it’s even more critical that consumers’ engagement and their experience with a brand are ‘engineered’ by creating relevant brand touch points that create stimuli at key moments within their day. All communication channels need to work that much harder in this economic environment.”

Outdoor advertising plays a strategic role within the channel mix. “If one looks at a brand’s promotional objectives within the purchasing cycle, outdoor advertising is particularly powerful at building awareness and creating interest, integrated with other channels, of course. An outdoor ad is also a key vehicle to aid in adoption and the repurchase of a brand. In many ways outdoor advertising is the umbrella that pulls a media campaign together by encapsulating the essence of the brand using creative shorthand. It reminds people of other communication that they’ve been exposed to, forging a strong link with the full brand message. Key to the success of any outdoor campaign, however, is the creativity. One of the biggest threats to the effectiveness of any outdoor advertising campaign is the message that is flighted on the billboard. We provide marketers good site locations, effective reach, and a blank canvas…all of which depend on the message on the billboard to be successful. The mode of interaction for outdoor advertising is passive, so ads need to work hard to grab consumer attention. Visually arresting images, short sharp copy lines and innovative ideas are crucial for delivery.

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Jones says ways to use outdoor advertising more effectively and stretch the marketing budgets include:

• Co-operative advertising (auto brand X with tyres, chips and tomato sauce, etc).
• Citilite medium is proving to be the new workhorse for outdoor advertising – tactical use, rotation – “walking” your message (billboard face) to a new market every two weeks extends reach quickly.
• Geo-demographic, lifestyle and psychographic packages – audience solutions.

Richard Bode, sales and marketing executive of Primedia Outdoor, says outdoor advertising can be used across the communication/conversion process, from a launch (high impact, large format) strategy, to a maintenance/support (smaller formats, high frequency) strategy.

Primedia Outdoor has a proprietary product called PrimePlan that provides a complete outdoor campaign planning service comprising a sophisticated data base of regional demographics, combined with detailed computerised mapping software interfacing with AMPS and independent research.

“Outdoor advertising, when used correctly, with the right creative message, in the right locations and in the right quantity, can be one of the most powerful and cost effective communication platforms that you can ever use,” he says.