

Let me explain...

...how diversification in marketing helped Alsip Home & Nursery draw in a big crowd for its 2011 Flower & Garden Show.



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In years past, Alsip Home & Nursery had gone away from radio advertising. However, we've come to the realization that advertising can be a lot like investing in the stock market — you want to be diversified, and never put all of your money into one stock. The same goes for advertising. It can be a bad idea to put all your advertising dollars into one channel of media, because there are all sorts of platforms that people listen to and look at and open up. Because of that, we decided to be a little more diversified in our media selection.

And with the way things are right now with the economy and advertising rates, you can really negotiate for better rates. We're lucky that we have an experienced marketing guy that we've worked with for years, and with his help, we've decided to explore a few more avenues this year, one of which includes getting back into radio.

Back in March, Alsip's kicked spring off in a big way by hosting our 2011 Flower & Garden Show at both of our store locations. This event encourages our customers to shake the frost off with us and come in for free educational seminars, a handful of giveaways, and to check out the newest varieties and products for the upcoming season. We also did a nice job at taking advantage of what our vendors could offer us.

When a representative can come in and promote their product, it's like having an extra employee on the floor. Some vendors also supplied us with product for giveaways.

This year, the Flower & Garden Show put us up 24 percent over last year's event, which we were

ecstatic about, especially since we moved the event up one week earlier.

Here are a few things we did at Alsip Home & Nursery to get the word out about our big spring event:

Radio

Our approach to radio this year has been two-fold and we've really done our homework and chose to work with stations that have a higher listenership. On top of trying to hit the female demographic with one station that plays soft rock, Alsip's is a big fan of the talk radio, AM format.

If you think about listening to radio while you're driving, stations that mostly play music can start to become background music and then when commercials come on, you might be more inclined to tune into another station.

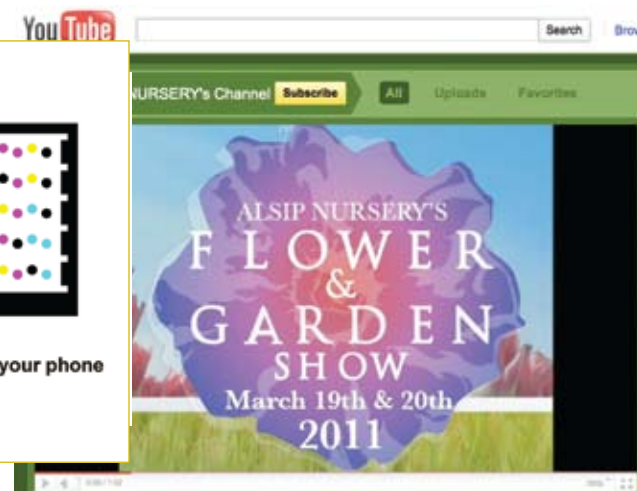
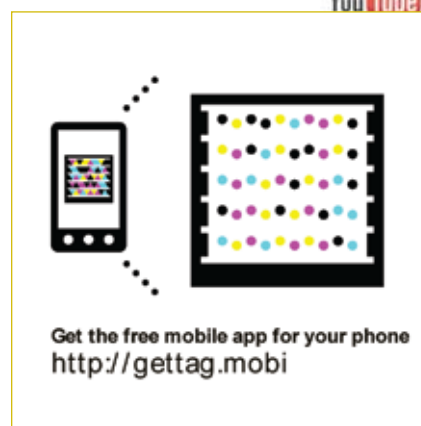
But on stations that are known more for their news and talk formats, the listener might be a little more engaged and pay closer attention to what they're hearing, so when the time comes for a commercial break, it might not be considered as much of a disruption. They might hear us out.

Newspaper

With one Alsip location in Northeast Illinois and the other in Northwest Indiana, we turned to the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Northwest Indiana (NWI) Times* to get total market coverage.

Between the two stores, we used the *Tribune* to distribute 180,000 large, foldout inserts promoting the event and our store to subscribers in predetermined zones. We used the newspaper to distribute the inserts, but not to print them.

Our second location in Saint John, Ind., worked out a nice partnership with *NWI Times*, which brought the newspaper on as an event co-sponsor. From this team up, Alsip's received a free full-page ad and a feature story on Alsip's and our upcoming event. In exchange for those perks, *NWI Times* just wanted a table at the event to sell subscriptions. We also used its logo to co-brand all of our promotional items.



Alsip's radio ad for its 2011 Flower & Garden Show also took the shape of a video and was posted on the retailer's website and Facebook and YouTube pages. Check it out here by scanning the tag above with your smartphone.

The newspaper was so happy with the turnout it is now interested in co-sponsoring our Ladies Night Out event in June.

Instore

A special logo was created for the show this year. Using that logo, we made event-exclusive shirts that our associates wore leading up to it. We also went a traditional route with bag stuffers.

Digital

In our digital efforts, we sent out an email invite a week before the show to Alsip's preferred customer list — the A-Listers. This email detailed the show's features and enticing giveaways.

We also used our Facebook page as a teaser and started to promote the Flower & Garden Show maybe 30 days in advance. Through this popular form of social media, we're able to reach nearly 1,200 "fans."

There's something to be said about pushing an event too early. It's good to let your audience know something's in store, but that can't be it. You have to keep reminding them. Repetition is critical and marketing frequency can be an event's best friend.

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