

# How to Place Television Ads



SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST® CHURCH



## How To Place Television Ads

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## Introduction

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to proclaim to all people the everlasting Gospel in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12.

One measure of how well we are accomplishing this mission in North America is to determine how many people recognize the name "Seventh-day Adventist." Name recognition is an important measurement of whether we are actually accomplishing what we set out to do.

For instance, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a strong family identification, Mennonites are known for their community service projects and the United Methodists urge us to "Catch the Spirit!" Churches that rank high in name recognition have fostered a strong identity with certain issues, causes or projects.

In other words, we get a name because of who we are and what we do. In the past, Seventh-day Adventists have been identified with the Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking (now the Breathe-Free Plan), Sabbath-keeping and vegetarianism.

In 1994, a public awareness study was commissioned by the Office of Information and Research of the North American Division to survey the perceptions and attitudes of the general public toward the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Fifteen hundred respondents were asked several questions that indicated their awareness of Seventh-day Adventists. The result? In the general population, 53% had read or heard of Seventh-day Adventists.

However, if you break that statistic down into age groups, here is what the researchers found by age group:

- 62% of those 30 years and older
- 35% of young adults ages 18-29
- 10% of those 17 and younger

had read or heard of Adventists. Large numbers of young people had virtually no awareness of our church!

As communications leader in your church, you want others to know about your church. You especially want young people to know the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a vibrant, caring community—Christ-centered, Bible-based, a people of hope.

But how to reach them?

Try television!

## Getting started

Your local congregation is anxious to get the message out about Seventh-day Adventists and is considering a television awareness campaign. As communications leader, you'll want to make a presentation to the pastor and church board that answers the most commonly-asked questions such as:

- What kind of television ad can a religious organization sponsor?
- What is a public service announcement?
- Which TV channels will air public service announcements?
- In addition to PSAs, what other broadcast opportunities are available?
- Who do you contact at the TV or cable station to get information?
- Can you target a specific audience?
- Tips for producing local public service announcements

According to author and news commentator Bill Moyers, "That little screen is the largest challenge God has given us in a long, long time. It can be the largest classroom and the largest cathedral."

Seventh-day Adventists have a unique, life-giving message to share. We can share our joy in the Lord individually and also extend our reach through television.

Consider the following pages a step-by-step course to help get your church "on the air"!

Let's get started . . .

### What kind of television ad can a religious organization sponsor?

Many religious organizations (United Methodists, Mennonites and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints come to mind) sponsor public service announcements.

According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC):

A **public service announcement** is "any announcement . . . for which no charge is made and which promotes programs, activities or services of federal, state or local governments . . . or the programs, activities or services of non-profit organizations . . . and other announcements regarded as serving community interests."

The above description may sound bland, but public service announcements (PSAs) are often issue-oriented.

James Wexler, vice-president of West Glen, a New York video production and distribution house, explains that "today, the issues are hard-hitting and cover a wide range of topics. AIDS and drug abuse dominate the scene, followed closely by issues such as homelessness, concern for the environment and missing children. PSAs very much reflect the changing face of American society."

The standard length for PSAs are 60, 30, 20, 15 and 10 seconds. They are usually broadcast free by radio or television stations.

## Which TV channels will air public service announcements?

“Television” includes several kinds of channels: network, cable and public television.

**Network TV** - a group of TV stations that broadcast the same programs. The stations can be owned by a headquarters company—the network—that is the source of the programs or can be independent—an affiliate or network affiliate.

**Cable TV (CATV)** - a television distribution system where TV signals are transmitted via cable (insulated wire), rather than through the air, to TV sets of subscribers in a community or locality. Some local communities have negotiated a free *public access channel* into their franchise agreement with the cable company.

**Public TV** - noncommercial, educational television supported primarily by grants and contributions rather than by advertising.

(*Webster's New World Dictionary of Media and Communications*, 1996)

Public service announcements (PSAs) are most often aired on the public access channel(s) of cable television stations, followed by regular cable and public TV channels.

Simply call your local cable company and ask if they sponsor one or more public access channels. The larger companies have community program coordinators or local origination coordinators who can send you information about available channels and time slots.

Television networks also run PSAs. But they must, of course, be professionally produced and in the national interest. There is stiff competition for network air time.

## Who do you contact at the TV or cable station to get information?

Public service directors are your prime contact at most television stations for public service material, particularly PSAs and community calendar listings. If there is no public service director, the station manager can direct you to the appropriate person.

Keep in mind that public service directors may wear many hats and are usually pressed for time. It's best to be brief and concise, and always ask if it is a good time to talk. If not, offer to call back when it is convenient.

Questions to ask:

- does your station accept public service announcements?
- are there any special policies regarding PSAs?
- is a producer's guide available with information about the station's preferred length and format for PSAs?
- what is the lead time for a PSA?

(“Lead time” refers to the advance time the station needs the PSA prior to airing it.)

## **In addition to PSAs, what other broadcast opportunities are available to local churches?**

As you have probably already discovered from your own television channel-surfing, there are many opportunities to advertise the good news about your local congregation or non-profit organization.

Television air time is generally divided into three categories: programs, news and public service announcements. Check to see which format best suits the needs and budget of your local congregation—several are free!

Types of air time available to communicators:

- public service announcements
- community calendar listings
- news broadcasts
- short features (1 -10 minutes)
- special programs (1/2 hour; 1 hour or more)
- talk and interview shows
- free-speech messages or guest editorials

### **Quick Facts:**

1. 98% of the homes in the United States have at least one television set.
2. There are over 11,000 radio and television stations licensed by the FCC, as well as several hundred low-power TV stations, almost 10,000 cablecasters and dozens of cable networks.

## **Can you target a specific audience?**

Yes! With the emergence of new cable channels devoted to niche markets, it is easier than ever to target your communication to a specific audience.

Multiple religious cable channels are available including the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), Faith & Values Channel, Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) and the Inspiration Network (INSP).

Who are you trying to reach? Families? Men? Women? Young adults? Boomers? Scan your television listings for channels that appeal to these groups and adapt the style of your PSA to fit the channel's format.

Shortcut: the community access coordinator at the TV station or local cable company can help you pick the best time slot(s) for your intended audience. Some are even available for production help if you need it.

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Testing . . . testing . . .

Which gender(s) and age groups are most likely to watch these channels?

Gender(s)	Age Group
The Disney Channel	
CNN	
The Learning Channel (TLC)	
Discovery Channel	
LifeTime	
ESPN	
The Weather Channel	
MTV	
MSNBC	
Nickelodeon	

## Tips for producing a local public service announcement

If your church is interested in producing a local TV public service ad, here are some suggestions for saving money at different levels of ad production.

1. Script - do you have an English teacher, editor or copywriter in your congregation? Ask them to submit a first draft for a 30 or 60-second TV ad. Full word count for a 60-second spot is approximately 140-150 words; for a 30-second spot it's 70-75 words. If your target audience is young people, give your youth group a go at it!
2. Video equipment - don't buy new equipment! Most large cable companies have both a studio and professional video equipment available. They may require you to attend one or more video production classes to become certified to use their equipment, but the classes are short-term, hands-on and usually free!
3. Production assistance - most stations have community access coordinators whose job it is to give you assistance in the production and marketing of a PSA. Use their expertise to your advantage!

Remember: The better the production quality and the better the content, the better the viewership.

## Communication leader's checklist for an effective television awareness campaign

Once you have established the need for a community awareness campaign and your church is committed to exploring the television media, you can begin answering these questions.

1. Research local demographics—what is the makeup of your community? How many family units? Single families? Ages of residents? Ethnicity? Education? Economic status? Religious denominations?
2. Who is your target audience—who do you want to reach?
3. What is the name of your local cable TV company? Public TV station?
4. Does your local cable company offer a public access channel(s)?
5. Do you know the names of your local television's public service directors? community access coordinators? station managers?
6. Have you requested a producer's guide from stations that originate locally-produced programs?
7. Have you requested a program guide or schedule from your public access station?
8. Do you know which stations will air public service announcements?
9. Has your church committed to a specific budget figure for a television awareness campaign?
10. Is your church interested in airing public service announcements? news items? short features? a half-hour or hour program?
11. Have you set a goal? Example: The Mansfield Seventh-day Adventist Church wants to reach (number of people) in the next six months or The Mansfield Seventh-day Adventist Church wants to air four PSAs (number of times) on (name[s] of station[s]).
12. Have you compared the cost of advertising / programming at various stations?
13. Have you discussed available air dates with a TV station representative?
14. When dealing with a regular cable channel (not public access) have you asked:
  - do you carry advertising?
  - what are your rates and availabilities?
  - what length spots are accepted?
  - what format is required?
  - how can you prepare your spots for delivery to the station?
  - what are the deadlines for delivery?
15. Based on your budget, how many spots can you afford? over what span of time? on which channels do you wish to place your spots? what days and time of day?

## **Adventist Media Center**

The Adventist Media Center can serve local churches by negotiating and buying time on network and cable television stations.

Seventh-day Adventist churches or conferences who have committed a substantial budget for television advertising or programming can enlist the help of the Adventist Media Center in buying time and placing their ad or program on TV.

[www.adventistmediacenter.com](http://www.adventistmediacenter.com)

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