

# DOES YOUR AD SUCK?

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I'm starting to wonder what people are thinking about when they write their ads. In the 27 or so years I've been in this business (as well as the time I spent working in the retail and food & beverage industries), I've always heard that the AIDA formula should be followed when writing ads:

A: Attention

I: Interest

D: Desire

A: Action

That sure made (and makes) sense to me - I want to grab the readers ATTENTION, arouse their INTEREST in what I have to offer, awaken their DESIRE to learn more, and compel them to take the ACTION of either calling or visiting me for more information and to buy my product or service - makes sense, right?

Now, do me a favor, please: stop reading this for a moment, and grab a newspaper and a couple of apartment advertising magazines and tell me how many ads follow this simple, effective formula.

ATTENTION: What headline or photo grabs your attention as you flip through the ads? Is it the name of the management company or the apartment community - at this point in the process, WHO CARES! How about photos of the buildings? Sure, we want to live in a place that looks nice, and I'd rather see the INSIDE - you know, where the furniture goes? Is it that two-inch square floor plan of a three bedroom, two-bath apartment - with room dimensions? I know I'm getting older and that my vision is starting to go, and you would need an electron microscope to make out the details of a floor plan in a half-page ad, let alone a 2 x 2 inch ad!

Are you offering some special deal or exceptional value - or both? Then why is it buried at the bottom of the ad, or featured on some sideways banner across the picture of the pool or clubhouse?

The headline is supposed to get the reader's attention – does yours?

INTEREST: What are you interested in? An apartment, right? And what do you see as you flip through the ads – photos of building exteriors and pools? How many photos of an apartment INTERIOR did you find? So, unless Spiderman or Aquaman need an apartment, why are we not featuring the apartment interiors? How many Customers visit your property, look only at the exterior, pool and clubhouse, and then whip out their checkbook while exclaiming, “I love it! I’ll take it!” Why not put photos of the INSIDE of the apartments in the ads?

Another way to get my interest is the ad copy – what are you selling? I think everyone moves to solve one of two problems: 1) They HAVE to move, because of any number of reasons – marriage, divorce, got a roommate, lost a roommate, job transfer, etc.; or 2) They WANT to move because they don't like where they live now. So, the copy and bullets should tell them the unique, special, valuable, one of a kind, can't find it anywhere else kind of stuff – THAT'S what will get their interest! Look at the bullets in the ads you're reading – how many “fully equipped kitchens” are there? How about wall to wall carpeting, pool, ceramic tile, and vinyl tiles? Are these items THAT UNIQUE in your market, or would you be surprised if an apartment DIDN'T have them? What exactly is a “spacious, well-designed floor plan? Will my king-size bed fit in a spacious, well-designed floor plan?

A key component to arousing my interest is whether or not the price is in the ad. I don't have time to call around to get prices to see if I can afford to live at your property, so if your price or price range is not in your ad, I'm on to the next ad. I know that all of us have extra leasing and office staff around who have nothing better to do than answer the phone all day and deal with the endless stream of unqualified “How much are your two bedrooms?” calls because there is no price in the ad, right? So, PLEASE put the price in the ad – either as “Starting from only \$\_\_\_\_”, or “Huge Two Bedroom Apartment homes from \$\_\_\_\_\_ to \$\_\_\_\_\_”.

DESIRE: Now that you've got my attention, and have aroused my interest, why do I want to live at your community? What do I desire that you have and I don't? What is more appealing about living at your community than ALL of

the other properties in this market? Well, let's go back to the copy – especially the bullets – that should answer the question, “Why do I want to live here?” or even “Why do I want to invest an hour of my time to call and visit this property to see if I want to live here?” What are the SPECIAL features/benefits/values/prices/deals/quality of service that I don't have now and would have if I moved to your property?

One thing that will fan my desire is putting JUST enough information in the ad to make me want to call or visit to get MORE information. IF you put TOO MUCH info in the ad, I don't feel the need to call you because all of my questions are answered – or so I think. And, just because all of us once made a list of 100 reasons why someone should live at our property doesn't mean we have to try and squeeze that list into our ads!

**ACTION:** How many ads have a call to action? You know, like:

“Call Today!”

“Call for an appointment today”

“Please call Doug today to set up an appointment”

“Only a Few Left – Reserve your new apartment home TODAY”

“We're Open until 7:00 daily – come visit us today!”

“Act Today to Enjoy Great Savings!”

“Please call us today to see if we have one for you”

“ Please visit us at [www.dougsapartments.com](http://www.dougsapartments.com) for more information”

You get the idea right? Well, how many asked you to do something NOW? I just read a 154-page apartment advertising publication that had TWO ads with a call to action – TWO ADS!!

When you go shopping, what ads grab your attention? What makes the difference of whether you go to Macy's or Burdines – is it simply price, or is it also ease of getting to the store (location) product selection, quality and availability of service, how the store looks, the pretty pictures of the merchandise in their ads (When was the last time you saw ad for clothing or furniture or televisions that had a picture of the exterior of the store?) Every Sunday morning, I go out and get the paper, and divide it up: I keep all the ads, and Diane gets all the rest. I look through the ads, searching for whatever I think I want to buy that week. Some ads JUMP out at me, and others just sort of lay there. When I find what I want, and see how much it

costs, and know where I have to go to buy it, and when I have to be there, or if I have to be there by a certain day or time to get a deal, I'm a happy guy. Would your ad make me a happy guy?

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