

# Advertising can be effective: if done correctly

By MARK LESLIE

LINCOLNSHIRE, Ill. — Frequent advertising on television and radio works, but effectiveness can be gained much more cheaply, according to Vince Alfonso Jr., president of Alfonso Creative Golf Enterprises in Williamsville.

Advertising salespersons try to sell frequency, but golf course operators should pay no attention, advises Alfonso, who is lead-

ing a one-hour presentation on "Turning On to TV and Radio" during the Public Golf Forum Oct. 28-29 as well as a one-day post-conference workshop here, Oct. 30.

A sampling of the tips Alfonso will give in his presentations includes:

- Don't be overcome by that sales push for buying frequent ads. "All of a sudden, in their first outreach, they [operators] think of

big dollars or are told of big dollars and they withdraw to look at other [advertising] vehicles."

- Don't be intimidated by appearing in your own ad. "Anticipating a TV shot, the first thing a person thinks is, 'I'm not able. I've got to hire a professional.' They need to do some homework first. The idea is to equip them with the information they need to go home and get the job done."

- Don't be frightened by the talk of \$1 million-a-minute ads on the Super Bowl broadcast. "People hear that and think that in the smallest logical increment for them, it will cost \$1,000 or \$10,000 a minute, and they run from the idea. They operate in an absence of information and are not comparing apples and apples."

- Road block. "If I wanted to gain new customers with radio, I would run a commercial on all the radio stations in our market (that is, say, 100,000-population cities, not New York City, Chicago, or LA). You might have four or five stations. I would run all week at the same time of the day — preferably drive-time. It's called 'road blocking.' Listeners have to hear my commercial."

"You're doing this on a reasonable trial investment of dollars," Alfonso added, "seven days a week times five stations."

- Eliminate for new customers. "When golfers come to the pro shop and say what stations they heard the ad on, I eliminate those stations and concentrate on the stations where my customers don't listen because I want new customers."

"Of course, when you want to communicate with your present customer base, you use those stations."

- Use the "creatures-of-habit" approach. "I feel people set their radios to their station and leave it there," Alfonso said. "While they're getting ready for work they're listening to the same station. I will run a commercial on a news talk station from Monday from 6 to 7 a.m., Tuesday from 7 to 8, Wednesday from 8 to 9, Thursday from 6 to 7 and Friday from 7 to 8. I've bought five commercials. Everyone who listens has heard it in two time frames."

"After two weeks, those people can't distinguish if I'm on there every day or not. In 18 years I've done this and people have told me they hear me every day on the radio. I'm not there but they think I am. I multiply my dollar value by buying that particular schedule."

"A radio station won't tell you that because they're making their money selling frequency."

They want you to buy two spots an hour for five days. They're not lying because it will work, but you don't have to do all that."

- Be constant with advertising. It pays big long-term dividends. "If you're on the radio for nine weeks, even if you're not on afterward, golfers think you are."

During his seminar, Alfonso will delve into use of local stations' in-house talent, independent production companies, cable stations, pre-commercial planning and post-production costs, among other issues.

"I'm trying to encourage golf course owners to turn the tide — to learn the whole story, not the half-truth about TV and radio advertising," Alfonso said, "so they can be better equipped. Maybe TV or radio will work for them."

"The point is that a course with a \$12 or \$28 greens fee had better have a mission, know what and how they want to communicate, put out a budget and get the job done as best as they can using everything at their disposal."

## TV and Radio

Continued from page 1

The Forum, sponsored by *Golf Course News* Oct. 27-29 at Marriott's Lincolnshire Resort, is the only national golf conference serving course owners, managers, developers and superintendents at public-access golf facilities.

"No one in the industry, to my knowledge, has ever done a television and radio workshop where you can spend a day to get information on how this all works," said Alfonso, past president of the National Golf Course Own-

ers Association and former co-owner of The Rail in Springfield whose background also includes many years managing some widely known music stars.

"Most [general managers and pros] are dependent on the professional at the local TV or radio station, or on the station's sales department, or an independent production firm. Some of these people are phenomenal. Some are very responsible and stay within budget. But an owner of a course could benefit greatly by learning more about it themselves."

In a room of 350 PGA pros at a recent function, only two acknowledged using TV or radio, Alfonso said, adding that golf owners and operators have simply not kept pace with technology.

"We're catching up fast," Alfonso said. "Computers in the golf shop are not strangers any more. The same thing is happening in terms of how we market our facilities."

"It's no longer just the big courses that spend television and radio money. We all want the most efficient use of our advertising, promotion and marketing dollars."

"In this workshop, we want people to learn more about these types of opportunities which can only benefit them economically. That's what this is all about. How can I gain information that will help me go home and improve my bottom line?"

Alfonso's 8 a.m.-5 p.m. session will include information on what to do and not do in TV and radio promotions, what to say and when and where to buy advertising. It will also feature critiques of attendees' video and radio spots as well as two "Star Search" periods.

"We want participants to send us video and radio spots ahead of

Continued on next page

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