The most important thing to understand about Yellow Pages is that eight to ninety percent of usage is driven by life events or major out-of-the ordinary purchases. This has dramatic consequences. It means that there are few "routine" users of Yellow Pages. Rather, usage is episodic. A person may not use Yellow Pages for months and months, then, in response to a life event, they may use it a dozen times in a week, after which time their usage goes back to zero.

This characteristic of Yellow Pages, while its major strength, is also its weakness: because usage is episodic, if a person is asked if they use Yellow Pages, a common and very true response would be "I can't remember the last time I used the Yellow Pages."

Major life events don't happen every day - in fact they don't happen very often for most people. So, Yellow Pages doesn't get used every day - or even every week - by most people. Unlike the Internet where people use it every day, people only use Yellow Pages a few "periods of time" a year. That is why, in these busy times, people have a hard time remembering it, and thus, the perception of lack of use.

The important thing to understand about Yellow Pages, is while it doesn't get used often, it gets used when it matters. That is what creates value for the advertiser. Yellow Pages is the ultimate point-in-time advertising vehicle. It allows a business to reach a consumer precisely at the time the user has a need, is ready to make a purchase, but needs information to help choose a business. People who come to the Yellow Pages want information about the business.

For this reason, almost 9 out of ten people that consult the Yellow Pages will make a purchase. They will look at about 5 ads and then contact two businesses. That gives a business close to a 50/50 chance of converting a Yellow Pages contact to a sale. Yellow Pages is the ultimate target marketing vehicle. No other medium comes close to providing businesses this kind of a conversion rate. (For example, the typical conversion rate from Internet searches is about1% to 4%).
Another consequence of the event-driven nature of Yellow Pages is that the majority of customers obtained through Yellow Pages will be new customers. Users are coming to Yellow Pages to find businesses they don't normally shop with. The event drives needs for products and services that the consumer doesn't normally purchase. That is why the Yellow Pages ad is ultimately a "sales person" for the business. The ad has to win over consumers who know nothing about the business and probably very little about the business's products and services.

A third consequence of the event-driven nature of Yellow Pages is that these are valuable customers. They are not driven to a purchase by a discount or promotion. They have a need. They want the product or service now. They are willing to pay to get it. They simply want to be convinced that they are getting the best value for their money. And, the amount they spend when they come to the Yellow Pages is frequently in the hundreds to thousands of dollars.

Roughly seven out of ten adults use the print Yellow Pages at some point through the year. Twenty-five percent of adults use Yellow Pages in a typical week. Many people think Yellow Pages is used less, but the reason for that perception goes back to the fact that Yellow Pages is only used "episodically." It is not an every-day medium like the Internet or Radio or TV. It only gets used when it will make a difference.

Many people think the younger generation doesn't use the Yellow Pages. Well, the only people that use Yellow Pages are people with money to spend. Young people have been hit hardest by the recession and its aftermath. They don't have much money to spend. They do begin to use Yellow Pages when they begin to experience major events (getting married, having kids, etc.), but many have been deferring those events because of the tough economic times.

The baby boomer and senior generation, however, has the money to spend. They are in their peak earning years. People over the age of 50 own over 80% of the nation's financial assets and earn half of the nation's disposable income. This is a generation that grew up with the Yellow Pages and continues to use it.

The most successful business strategy ever discovered is a simple one called "follow the money." Yellow Pages allow a business to reach the people with money - because only those with the money come looking for information about businesses in the Yellow Pages.

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