



PRINTtips

Direct Mail Marketing... Dead on Arrival or Alive and Well?



TechneGraphics INC
Professional Printing Providers

2002 Ford Circle
Suite D
Milford, Ohio 45150

513.248.2121

Fax: 513.248.5141
info@techgra.com
www.techgra.com



www.techgra.com

What's your opinion of direct mail marketing versus e-mail and social media as a marketing tool?

- Do you see e-mail, Facebook, and Twitter as today's relevant marketing strategies, replacing direct mail marketing?
- Are you convinced that most customers and prospects view marketing mail as junk mail?
- Did you try direct mail marketing once, with disappointing results?

If so, you may be surprised to learn that a large body of research supports the fact that direct mail marketing remains an effective marketing tool and that it is enhanced, not supplanted, by e-mail and social media. It's not that direct mail is dead – it's that single-channel communication is dead.

Using marketing strategies cooperatively

Because not everyone responds to communications in the same way, today's marketer who uses only one method to reach customers and prospects is risking some effectiveness. Rather than use a method in isolation, several methods can be combined to multiply their effect:

Scenario 1: Use a direct mail post card with a printed QR code to direct the target audience to your web site. At the web site, provide an incentive to gather e-mail addresses and opt-in permissions. Invite visitors to engage with your social media sites.



Scenario 2: Use the opt-in e-mail list to direct a customer to your web site to request a direct mail pack. Send a follow-up e-mail message to be sure the pack was received.

Scenario 3: Use a direct mail piece to remind donors or members of the need to renew. Use e-mail to remind non-responders of the approaching deadline to join or give. Send a written communication to responders (thank you) and non-responders (second follow-up mailing).

As Charles Gaudet, marketing expert and founder of PredictableProfits.com, reminds us, "One would think that if digital communication was so good then the online giants of the world, namely Google and Microsoft (for example), would rely solely on e-mail and other digital communication, but they don't. In fact, they spend millions of dollars each year reaching out to customers and prospects using direct mail. Why? Because it works."

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Direct mail: the logical first step

John Jantsch, the owner of Jantsch Communications and creator of the Duct Tape Marketing System, says “Marketing is getting people who have a specific need or problem to know, like, and trust you.” For most small businesses and organizations, direct mail is the logical first step to accomplish these objectives.

Sending direct mail – particularly a series of mailings – allows prospects to become familiar with your company’s name, logo, location, product line, and services. Even if the prospect has no immediate need for what you are offering, you are building name recognition and allowing the prospect to get to know your business. Further, you increase the likelihood that if a prospect conducts an online search for a product or service you offer, the prospect will click through to your web site or may even visit it directly.

Is direct mail junk mail?

Although unsolicited advertising or promotional material is called junk mail by some, it is welcomed by others. According to the Direct Marketing Association 2010 Response Rate Trend Report, 79% of households either read or skim advertising mail sent to their home.

This finding is consistent with a study conducted by International Communications Research (ICR) for Pitney Bowes. That survey found that despite the widespread use and popularity of digital media overall, 73% of consumers prefer mail for receiving new product announcements, compared to 18% who prefer e-mail. The survey also found that 31% of consumers are less likely to discard unopened mail (including new product announcements, coupons, brochures, and catalogs) than they are to delete spam (53.2%).

Unsolicited mail versus unsolicited e-mail

To compare unsolicited mail to unsolicited e-mail, the ICR study asked consumers what specific advantages they saw in unsolicited mail. The results are interesting:

- 45.3% of respondents found mail to be less intrusive than e-mail;
- 40.2% of respondents found mail to be more convenient (to be saved and considered at leisure);
- 30.2% of respondents found mail to be less high pressure (let them consider their decision);
- 22.7% of respondents found mail to be more descriptive (easier to picture the offer); and
- 12 % of respondents found mail to be more persuasive.

Other differences include:

- E-mail can be designated by the intended recipient as spam and blocked from the inbox. A direct mail piece, on the other hand, does get into the mail box. And because it is tangible, some part of the mail piece will be seen even if it is quickly discarded.
- Mail that arrives regularly may be more welcome than e-mail. Prospects unsubscribe from e-mail at a faster rate than they request to be removed from a mailing list.
- If someone moves and turns in change-of-address orders to the USPS, that information is made available to mailers. E-mail service providers do not provide similar update services for e-mail addresses.
- Prospects may be skeptical of e-mail messages. By contrast, mail is a familiar medium whose contents are likely to be seen as reliable.

According to the United States Postal Service (USPS), in 2008 the average household received about 16 pieces of advertising-related mail per week, while the average consumer received 15-16 marketing e-mails a day. In 2009, Forrester Research predicted that e-mail marketing messages would reach an average of 25 per day by 2014. This means that there is significant competition for consumer attention with e-mail and relatively little for direct mail.

“... direct mail is the logical first step to accomplish these objectives.”

“... allows prospects to become familiar with your company’s name, logo, location, product line, and services.”

“... consumers prefer mail for receiving new product announcements...”

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Direct mail is a campaign, not a single event

Effective direct mail marketing is a campaign rather than a one-time mailing – the mail pieces are sent out on a regular, recurring cycle such as monthly or quarterly. If your budget allows for a 3000-piece mailing, it is better to mail three times to a list of 1000 rather than one time to a list of 3000. The costs will be nearly the same (especially if you don't vary the mail piece) but the total response rate will be greater. This is because each subsequent mailing reinforces your message and increases the likelihood that someone on the mailing list will have a current need for your product or service.

Rely on us for help

For many years we have been helping our customers communicate with their customers and prospects. We have the knowledge and experience to help you design a direct mail campaign; design and print the mail piece; process your mail list for data quality and hygiene; and provide mailing services to qualify for a discount on postage rates. We can also help you take advantage of any promotions currently being offered by the USPS. To learn more about our direct mail marketing services and how they help increase sales, contact us at 513-248-2121.

“Effective direct mail marketing is a campaign rather than a one-time mailing...”

Q. *Should I use a QR code on my direct mail marketing piece?*

A. Yes! Adding a Quick Response (QR) code to any printed piece makes it

interactive for smart phone users. A QR code is a two-dimensional graphical representation of information; after scanning the QR code with a smart phone, the information will be displayed on the smart phone screen.

Early uses of QR codes were to display a web site or telephone number. Now they are used to display a coupon, an e-mail, an SMS message, or to initiate download of an audio file or video stream.

QR codes were introduced in Japan in 1994 and quickly spread to Europe. Adoption of the technology in the United States and Canada has been slower but is steadily gaining momentum.

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How We Process Marketing Messages



“to understand differences in how online and print media communicate a message.”

How do people process marketing messages? To answer that question, the British Royal Mail commissioned a study in 2007 that used functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) to understand differences in how online and print media communicate a message. The research was conducted by Millward Brown in conjunction with the University of Bangor in Wales, UK.

Ten males and ten females were shown images presented on screen (to simulate the online experience of e-mail) and then on printed cards (to simulate direct mail). Here is a summary of the findings:

We saw that the physical material facilitated greater emotional processing—

seen as more brain activity in the area associated with the integration of visual and spatial information—suggesting it is more real to the subject. The benefits for advertisers here are multifold. Greater emotional involvement leads to more positive brand associations along with easier brand recall. As well, this more tangible experience is also more readily internalized by the viewer, which means the ads should have a more personal effect that in turn positively influences motivation.

In contrast, the response to online materials demonstrated a greater difficulty to focus.