

Six Ways to Make Your Direct Marketing Campaign a Success

by Barbara Morrie, President, Laser Image

Social media and web marketing may have their names in lights at the present, causing the focus to shift to digital marketing. However, that doesn't make it the best option for every audience. For example, only 45 percent of seniors have Internet service. Furthermore, Market Scan found that "the figure for available emails is around 20 percent of postal addresses, meaning that by avoiding direct mail you could be missing 80 percent of your target market." And people who do use email regularly have become savvier at blocking out sales messages with advanced filters. If in the event, email messages are actually read, they are quickly forgotten or buried by new messages. People also abandon email accounts and create new ones about once a year, so even solid leads expire quickly.

Next to the ever-changing landscape of digital marketing stands direct mail, a reliable method that uses time tested practices to generate substantial results. A study done by the Direct Marketing Association found that the response rate for direct mail to an existing customer averages 3.4 percent, compared to 0.12 percent for email. When balanced with the right creative and optimal data, direct mail can deliver more than just a meaningful piece of mail; it can boomerang a powerful return on investment.

Here are six ways to make your direct marketing campaign a success:

1) Offer a great coupon or promotion. High quality direct mail is not only packed with relevant information, it also entices readers with an irresistible deal. By adding value with a discount, bonus gift, or free trial, the mail focuses on the reader and makes them want to say yes. By using direct marketing campaigns, that have stood the test of time, companies have a better chance of making a good impression on people. Since fewer companies are leveraging the power of good old-fashioned snail mail, you company has the ability to entice customers with useful coupons. This tangible, touchable value adds weight to any offer and makes a bigger impact than some digital components can.

2) Be targeted. Instead of buying lumps of leads, build your own direct mail campaign to get better results. Doing a random blast won't get you anywhere. There are plenty of expert lists. Rather than doing a random blast of data, find a data base that helps to filter the results based off your specific needs. The more refined the search the better. "Pray and spray" marketing will never be able to compete with a thoughtfully planned campaign designed to target a specific demographic with information that interests them.

3) Make it personal. Contrary to popular belief, direct mail doesn't have to be boring. By sending impersonal cards or letters, you can be assured that your information is destined for the trash can. Thanks to sophisticated marketing software and digital printing, savvy marketers are personalizing messages and engaging prospective customers in incredible ways. Envelopes that catch the eye and engage the reader with customized teaser copy, highly customized letters that include handwritten notes, and vivid brochures/inserts that showcase further details capture and engage readers.

4) Remember quality control. Once your material gets into the hands of your consumers, don't lose them with poorly written content. Make sure everything is 100% correct. Proof read for grammar, spelling and typos. Also, avoid sounding like a broken record or a used car salesman. Instead you should be adding value and generating excitement.

5) Integrate Your Strategy. Don't miss this opportunity to leverage your messaging and creative with other marketing initiatives. This helps to ensure brand cohesion. Consumers might need to hear your message 5 times before they act on it. The brand must live in all aspects of the design: from the logo to the graphics to the font and color choice.

6) Don't forget follow up. Turning people into loyal customers is going to take more than one mail out; it is going to be a continual process. There is a fine line between smart marketing and pestering your target demographic. The direct mail materials should have a call to action for people to connect with you online as well. By driving people to your website, blog or social media channels, they are asking to be kept in the loop for new information. This will help to keep them engaged long after the mail delivery.

Just because direct mail isn't the newest technique in the book doesn't mean it is not relevant. It can be a fantastic way to reach audiences that email never can, including seniors, email users who apply filters and people who appreciate getting real mail. Online marketing has become the new and shiny toy, but don't forget direct mail is still a reliable way to deliver compelling messages on an individual level. Together, direct mail and online marketing offers the perfect way to turn people into loyal customers.

Barbara Morris is instrumental in the development, delivery and marketing of the Laser Image breadth of mobile business application solutions. As president, Morris leads her IT Staff using open source and a Linux strategy; she has been involved in the Linux movement since 1995. To stay connected with the staff of almost 50, Morris attends Monday morning staff meetings in person (old school) to personally interact with the team. Laser Image is a \$7 million lead management, software development, and variable printing company headquartered in Dallas.