

Direct Mail: It's Alive! (And Never Died in the First Place)

BY CHARLIE MULLIN

We have probably all heard of that famous quip by Mark Twain: "The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated." Well, you might say the same thing about direct mail. Because not only is direct mail alive and well, it's exciting, it's innovative and, as the U.S. Postal Service says in a recent promotion, it can even be "irresistible."

So, what's this all about? It shouldn't be any surprise to a direct marketer that cutting-edge technology is leading the way to make mail more enticing and powerful than ever. In fact, advancements in printing now enable campaigns to use amazing colors, awesome tactile textures and unforgettable images.

The print and finishing methods available today, compared to just a few years ago, are



almost unimaginable. It's no secret that touch for print pieces helps a piece stand out and also invites interactivity, because people feel and remember it. This is all assisted by advances in textures and printing technology that continue to change with various coatings, varnishes, inks and special techniques. Research shows that when touch is part of the marketing experience, it helps shift the brain into a deeper level of engagement while building knowledge.

Another reason you should still be thinking about direct mail is that it certainly is not going away, despite what we keep hearing. In fact, according to the Direct Marketing Association, response rates among existing

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How Digital Marketers Stand Out in the Mail

BY PAUL BOBNAK



blanket statement!

But if it's true, then someone might want to let a lot of digital-first marketers know that. They're using direct mail to stand out from their heavy online competition.

The proof is in mail that I see every day crossing my desk. It succeeds in helping these marketers acquire new customers,

We've all heard it a million times: "Direct mail is dead"—because we live in a digital age, after all. Talk about a

retain existing ones and reactivate dormant accounts.

And one of the best things is that they're doing so without breaking the rules, changing the game, reinventing the wheel or whatever other cliché you want to throw out there.

They're not even pushing the envelope (literally, in most cases), but just using simple tactics that have been proven to work in direct mail for decades.

Here are a few of the old school approaches online marketers are using offline.

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DIRECT MAIL

BY JOHN KENNEDY

Tune Up Your Marketing Engine With Integrated Direct Mail



In the fast-paced world of commerce, you need a marketing strategy with depth, creativity and some serious zoom-zoom. When you line up at

the starting gate, does your marketing engine have what it takes to win the race? To stand out in today's marketplace you must engage your audience in many ways, meeting them where they are and

via channels they choose. Integrated marketing strategy is about meaningful customer engagement, and is a make or break element for any business to adopt, whether online or brick and mortar.

Let's dissect the ideal marketing engine. Just like a race car, all the parts must work together to beat the competition. The engine is the center of it all—the campaign message including product offerings, brand identification and how your company stands out from the other guys. Add on to the chassis: direct mail, email marketing, websites, social media, online ad word campaigns, point of sale efforts, telemarketing and anything else your audience might respond to.

You may be shocked to see direct mail on this list, after all, isn't direct mail dead? In a word, no.

The increase in email and online marketing has saturated consumers to the

point where direct mail feels easy in comparison. Show of hands for all of you out there with a "junk email" account used when a business requests your email. Hands up again, how often do you actually look at those emails? Just what I thought—most people only look at their emails when they decide to purchase a

The trick to success is an appealing offer driving the recipient to engage with your business in productive and profitable ways.

product, which is the opposite of what you want. Offers are designed to incentivize customers to act. If they never see your offer, they certainly won't take action. What to do?

Direct mail with a call to action instigating specific behavior is now more effective than ever. Think about it, the average U.S. consumer used to receive 290 pieces of direct mail per year. That number has reduced dramatically in the past five years, which means your piece is not competing for attention and is more likely to catch their eye. The trick to success is an appealing offer driving the recipient to engage with your business in productive and profitable ways.

Engaging Customers Using Integrated Campaigns—Direct Mail Plus Digital

Remember, the role of direct mail here is to be the enticing messenger, not the pushy salesperson. This is where the "new direct mail" looks nothing like its old self, strictly designed to work as a cog in the machine instead of the solo selling technique.

Make an introduction

Introduce your offering to clients and prospects via direct mail and email, pointing them to a custom web page to see more or take further action. Make sure the message includes why you thought they



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- JOHN KENNEDY, FOUNDER & TOP DOG



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would want to know about this exciting news. Of course, do everything you can to collect their email and demographics during their online visit.

Showcase your wares in full-color

A slick catalog showcasing your wares in full-color is still better eye candy than anything you can find on the web. Plus, it's all in one place with no clicks. While you're at it, insert a revved-up call to action—a coupon, special web offer or free item to encourage a visit. Adding a special message on the cover explaining why recipients got your catalog can also help with engagement.

Save money on something you already buy

The less exciting it is to spend money on, the better these offers work in direct mail. Think groceries, oil changes, prescriptions or any other item that is absolutely no fun to buy. Invite recipients to compare pricing and sweeten their first visit with free shipping or a special gift with the first order.

Deliver something to hold on to

While we're all stuck to our phones these days, the truth is that electronic information doesn't feel like something you can hold on to. Plus, it's hard to find things in the digital world of email and websites. Direct mail gives people something to hold onto that's simple and easy. It can be as simple as a coupon, or something bigger, like a recycling pick-up schedule, a list of holidays this year, a tipping guide or anything else that is relevant to your product and meaningful to the recipient.

Infuse fun into their day

Deliver fun with web sign-ups for a free trial or gift, contest entry, special VIP privileges or sharing fun social media content and customer stories. Everyone loves a package—bulky mail is the most fun to receive. With a 100 percent open rate, packages are worth the tiny bit of extra cost. Be creative with the contents,

including free samples and gifts with special offers driving the recipient to further engage with your brand.

Ask for feedback

We are on digital survey overload these days. There are web surveys on every receipt and email surveys for every single thing ordered online. Even for companies we like, everyone is sick of surveys littering their inbox. It's worth asking for feedback via direct mail, because my guess is, if it's short and easy, you might get a better response. Social media is a great venue for feedback because it is easy and quick, and it gives the opportunity to interact with like-minded people. Make sure your social media handles are prominently displayed on all direct mail.

A final note, the list is also a significant difference between the old direct mail

model and the modern one. A smart, targeted, clean list is the starting line for all of your campaigns. Know your target, know your goal and make sure the names you select are deliverable.

Pull in for a pit stop, re-think your marketing strategy and give integrated direct mail a spin. Take the first step and test out some of the customer engagement strategies discussed today. There's nothing to lose, and you might just cross the finish line way ahead of the competition.

John Kennedy is founder and CEO of Three Dog Logistics and has more than 25 years experience in the print and direct mail industries. Ready to rev up your marketing engine? Three Dog Logistics consultants will help with the last miles of your campaign journey: the cost to get it into the hands of your prospect. Remember, we take the bite out of postage and freight. Visit www.threedoglogistics.com or call 410-284-5494 ext. 220 to explore ways to save on the highest cost of your campaign.

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Stewart Lawn and Landscaping Revised Brochure Panel text – May 25, 2014

The NEW Gathering Place for Friends and Family

It's official, outdoor living areas have replaced the kitchen as THE gathering place for friends and family. Let us transform your backyard into an extension of your home for entertaining or just a peaceful getaway to relax and escape the stress of everyday life. We have designs to complement every lifestyle and budget so what are you waiting for? From outdoor lounges to kitchen/grilling stations to cozy firepits, we have the perfect addition for your home. No worries, we'll have your new outdoor paradise installed and ready to use this summer - let's get started.

Easy-Care, Low-Cost Backyard Designs with Huge Impact

Who says landscape renovations have to cost a bundle to make a HUGE IMPACT? Not us. At Stewart Landscaping we create exciting outdoor living areas to meet the individual needs and goals of each home-owner. We love the challenge of creating the perfect outdoor paradise that's easy to care for and on budget. Small or large spaces, full sun or partial, makes no difference to us – over the past 27 years we've done it all. All our designs build your outdoor space to reflect and extend the feel of your home, feature easy-care native plants, and utilize durable materials designed to withstand the elements for a long-lasting outdoor retreat.

Chic Outdoor Living Spaces Substantially Increase the Value of Your Home

Outdoor living spaces are the hottest trend in home decor these days, and there appears to be no end in sight. Adding chic outdoor living areas is a great way to expand the usable square footage of your home without investing in costly home additions. In fact, Remodeling Magazine claims that a beautiful, well-designed outdoor living space can almost match your investment dollar-for-dollar, when selling your home. With designs to complement every lifestyle and budget, from outdoor lounges to kitchen/grilling stations to cozy firepits, we have the perfect addition for your home. Add value to your home and create an outdoor paradise to enjoy this summer – call and let's get started today.

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