



Best practices in direct marketing



IT ALL STARTS AT THE BEGINNING.

Creating standards for data entry and creation is critical to cost savings and campaign accuracy. This may sound simple enough, but what may seem logical and systematic to one person can be completely foreign to the next. Add potential inconsistencies caused by migrating data from one system to another over the years, and you could have a real mess.

To avoid this, develop standard operating procedures for your company's departments that are responsible for data input and manipulation. This step is often taken for granted and overlooked, but it can save you time and avoid headaches in the long run.

MAKE SURE THAT YOUR DATA IS UP-TO-DATE.

As of November 23, 2008, the New Move Update standards of the United States Postal Service (USPS) require all mailers to use addresses updated within the previous 95 days of that mailing date. If you don't implement these practices and have a mailing with a high return rate, you may face a USPS audit. If USPS determines that you're out of compliance with USPS standards, it may hold you responsible for charges that are equal to the full postal rate of your non-compliant mailings.

What does this mean for you? One of two things. You'll need to implement a system with documentation, proving that you've systematically updated your data within the last 95 days. Or, you can use NCOA (National Change of Address) technology on your file to process your mailing list electronically and validate it against the USPS NCOA database. Doing so reduces instances of undeliverable mail by correcting the addresses prior to your mailing. You wind up with clean data, fewer returns and no postal issues.

I NEED MORE PROSPECTS. WHAT DO I DO?

There are many ways to acquire sales leads and mailing lists. What's most important is acquiring leads likely to buy from you and to match your business model. Perhaps your best customers aren't those who buy the most products, but rather those who buy your most profitable ones.

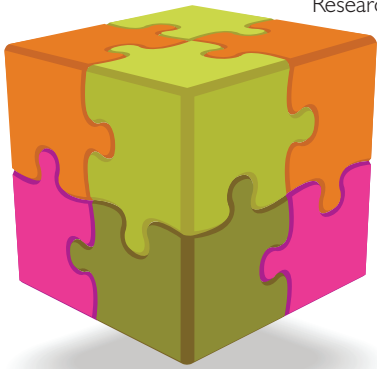
Before you start the process of acquiring sales leads, a little soul searching may be in order. The first thing is to define your objectives clearly — not just the type of campaign you'll execute, but what or who is the most logical target for your business model. Once your objectives are in place, you can start to build your list. A variety of technologies exist to create profiles of your current clients who meet your objectives. Then you can use a wealth of data to find more leads with the same profile. This systematic approach ensures the most successful campaign possible.

WITH SO MANY WAYS TO ADVERTISE AND PROMOTE, WHAT WORKS BEST?

Research shows that a diverse media mix is the most effective way to reach your target audiences.

An audience who rarely responds to print or radio may be very receptive to email marketing or direct mail, and vice versa.

A balanced marketing channel mix is often the best place to start. But if you truly want to run a successful campaign, you'll want to take advantage of the new analytic technologies available to you. A variety of tools can be used to identify the channels yielding the greatest return so that you can fine-tune your campaign in progress and leverage the most successful areas. Using these tools to adjust your plan along the way is key to maximizing your marketing dollars.



WHAT CAN I DO TO INCREASE MY RESPONSE RATES?

Everyone is short on time these days, and we need better ways to sort through the clutter and noise competing for our attention. If your messages are meaningful and tailored to the recipient, they are more likely to be heard — and to stick.

Many of us have some type of data on our customers and prospects. Use your data to craft messages, offers and visual elements that appeal to your target markets. Relevant content presented and delivered in ways that resonate with your audiences will get the results you want.



Direct Marketing, Data Management and Analysis
Digital, Traditional Offset and Variable Data Printing
Direct Mail Center, Cross Media Campaigns

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