

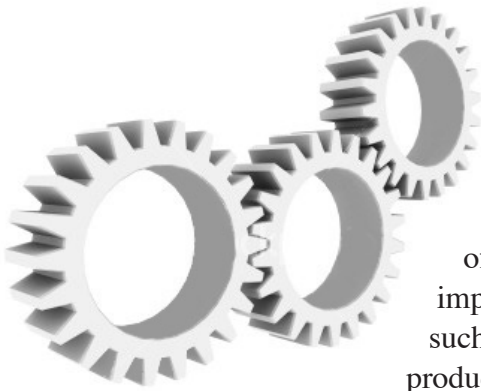
Boosting Direct Marketing Results

The Synergy of Direct Mail, Email and Landing Pages



Introduction

While marketing processes and techniques continue to evolve, three of the most critical marketing channels for most businesses are direct mail, email, and landing pages. The key is to develop a connected campaign that leverages the strengths of all three mediums. This white paper provides some insight into the value of each one, and shows how by creating a synergistic campaign, the overall ROI will be more than the sum of its parts.



The Three Key Marketing Channels

Direct Mail Marketing

While the introduction of email marketing had many predicting the demise of direct mail marketing, this method has remained effective, and is an important part of any campaign. Direct mail marketing, including physical media such as postcards, self-mailers, letter packages, and catalogs, puts a tangible product into the prospect's hands. Since less and less correspondence is made through the mail today, direct mail has less competition as compared to a decade ago. The increasing costs of paper and postage have given some marketers pause when creating direct mail campaigns.

According to an International Communications Research survey commissioned

by Pitney Bowes, and reported on the Marketing Powers Activate blog, "73 percent of consumers prefer mail for receiving new product announcements or offers from companies they do business with, as compared to 18 percent for e-mail, and that 31 percent of consumers are less likely to discard unopened mail than they are to delete unsolicited emails (spam) regarding new product announcements (53.2 percent)."¹ Direct mail still has an important part to play in an overall marketing strategy.

Email Marketing

Email marketing has been the darling of marketers over the last decade. Email is cheap, quick, and easy to generate. Email can be as simple as a text based message, or as complex as a full graphic design. As shown in Figure 1, email marketing has the power to assist with a variety of marketing purposes, from customer retention to driving both

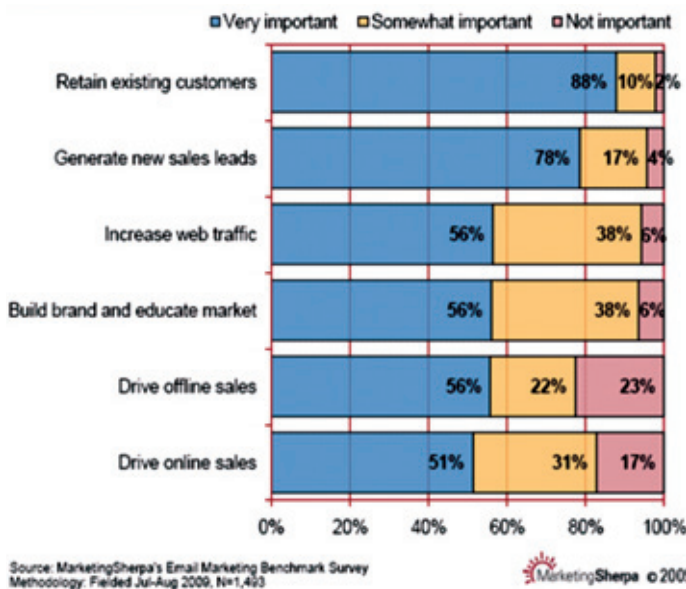


Figure 1. Purposes and Benefits of Email Marketing Campaigns.

¹ <http://marketingpowersactivate.com/2010/08/mythbusting-is-direct-mail-dead/>

online and offline sales. However, due to these benefits, email is often overused, and prospects become desensitized to email marketing messages. Email spam filters have become more complex, removing more and more messages from the email stream before they are even viewed.

Landing Page Marketing

Landing pages provide marketers with a location for call to actions included in other marketing media. Prospects can see a URL on a postcard or in an email, and can quickly visit that web site. A landing page gives you the ability to personalize your marketing message and blend it in with other marketing mediums being utilized in your campaign. Landing pages should provide information to the prospect that expands on the information provided in the other marketing media, leaving the prospect satisfied that they learned something new. They can also include opt-in forms for prospects to receive additional information. Web analytics allow marketers to capture a wide variety of information about their customers and their interests based on their visits to the landing pages. Even if a visitor does not decide to opt-in on your site, just by his visit you can gain information on what campaign elements are working.

Combining Direct Mail, Email, and Landing Pages into an Integrated Marketing Program

While the three mechanisms of direct mail, email, and landing pages work well on their own, it's by linking the three mechanisms where companies can reap the largest benefits. The three methods can essentially create a marketing cycle between the company and the prospect. The prospect gains more information about the company, products, and services and proceeds through the sales cycle; while the company gains more information about the prospect as well as additional sales.

There are many ways to combine the three mechanisms of direct mail, email, and landing pages. However, there are three main strategies for combining these methods:

1. A direct mail piece can prompt a prospect to visit a specific URL. The landing page can have opt-in information for the prospect to enter, and the company can then follow up with the prospect via email. This process works well for companies who wish to provide drip marketing over time, regular newsletters, and other content electronically to their prospects. A company can also use





“This trio of approaches ensures that companies are reaching all potential prospects.”

“personalized URLs” (PURLs) to catch the eye of the prospect. People love to see their name, and if you can grab the attention of a prospect by his name, he’ll be more likely to follow-up.

2. An email can direct a prospect to a specific URL via a link in the email. The landing page can have opt-in information for the prospect to enter, such as mailing address, and the company can then follow up with the prospect via direct mail. This option works well for companies that have large direct mail pieces such as catalogs. By only mailing the catalogs to prospects that opt-in, the company can save significant printing and postage costs that they would incur via a general mailing.
3. If you already have a list of prospects with email and address data, you can start by sending an email to this list that includes a link to a landing page. A follow-up direct mail piece containing the same marketing message and creative content is then sent to the prospect list which will help to reinforce the message. This option can also work in reverse: send a direct mail piece to your prospect list, and then follow-up to the same list with a supporting email that links to a landing page.

Why does this combination work? Prospects are active both online and offline. By combining physical marketing through direct mail and electronic marketing via email and web, companies are connecting with their prospects at both locations. Some people spend a significant amount of time online, others only check their email once in a while. This trio of approaches ensures that companies are reaching all potential prospects. A campaign with a consistent message across all media types will imprint your message on your prospect’s minds multiple times. It’s often these “multiple touches” that ensure that a message is read and remembered.

Combining marketing media can work for non-profits as well. As noted by Vinay Bhagat, Founder and Chief Strategy Officer, at Convio, “Direct mail campaigns can drive donors to specific landing pages or micro-sites that coordinate with the theme of the direct-mail campaign. Driving offline donors online is important not only because online gifts are generally higher, but because you collect their email address and are able to solicit and engage them across both mail and online thereafter.”² The Girl Scouts’ Support the Sash campaign “combined variable data printing, direct mail, email marketing, Purls and social media sites (Facebook and Twitter). The results included: a 5% unique response rate (8% with Purls), 31% of respondents donated, average donations increased from \$50 to \$250, the Facebook page grew by 141 members.”³

² <http://www.convio.com/our-research/newsletter/integrated-marketing.html>

³ <http://marketingpowersactivate.com/2010/08/mythbusting-is-direct-mail-dead/>

Ensuring a Successful Campaign

The development of a successful marketing campaign using the combination of direct mail, email, and landing pages has to start with creative content and design, plus a consistent message across all three media, and all three media have to be ready to go at the launch of the campaign. There's not much worse for a marketer than having a call to action in one media that the prospect can't access, such as a dead link in an email.

Content

As with any campaign, the creative content must be compelling, clean, and consistent. A common color scheme, fonts, and design elements should be used across all three media. The message has to flow from one component to another. Email and web strategies are often handled by different staff than those developing direct mail strategies. All parties have to be involved in a single overall development strategy to ensure that the message is clear.

Landing Pages

When creating a landing page for your prospects to visit, your call to action should be right at the top of the landing page. You can always have additional information for the prospect to read, and additional call to action items further down the page, but the prospect should not have to scroll down the page to see your call to action.

From a technology standpoint, ensure that the page is viewed and tested in multiple browsers, such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, and Safari. A page designed for Internet Explorer could look different or not function properly in Firefox, so by testing your landing page in different browsers, you'll ensure that your prospects see just what you want them to see. You'll also want to ensure that your web hosting company is problem-free before campaign launch. Top on Hubspot's list of Successful Landing Page Optimization Tips: have a professional looking website. Just like brick and mortar customers will shy away from a run-down shop, web visitors will quickly leave any site that has spelling errors or bad formatting.⁴

Email

Like landing pages, email should also be tested using different email applications, such as Microsoft Outlook, Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo!, and other applications. Your email could look different depending on the application, so testing can help ensure consistent delivery. If you use graphics and HTML in your email, ensure that the code is clean so

⁴ <http://hubpages.com/hub/Successful-Landing-Page-Optimization>





that the layout appears properly. Choose a width for your email that is wide enough to accommodate any images that you may want to include, but not so wide that it causes issues on smaller screens such as laptops or smartphones. Your email should also have a call to action at the top. On the Vertical Response marketing blog, they mention that they have found they “get about a 26% increase in clicks when the call to action is a button rather than a text link.”⁵

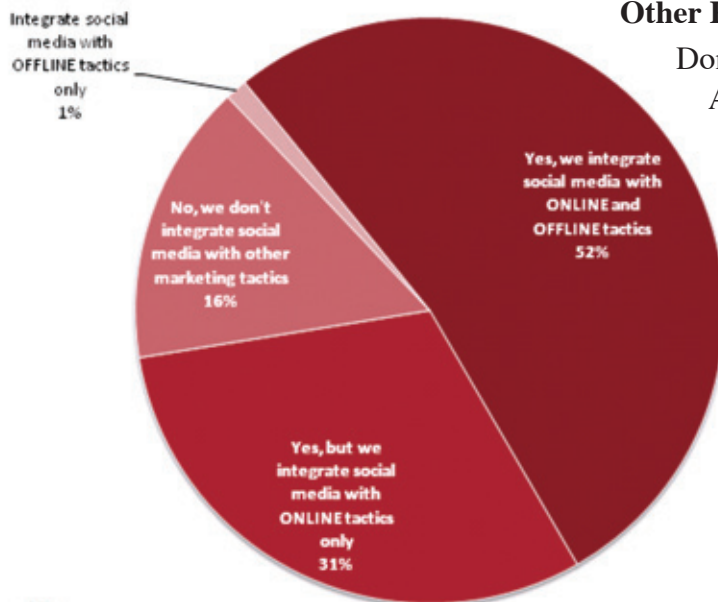
Direct Mail

Connecting direct mail to the online world can be as easy as including a website address on the mail piece. PURLs can also help to get the attention of the prospect, and QR codes can be utilized on direct mail to capture the prospect’s response. The key is to make it as simple as possible for the prospect to respond to the call to action. Once the prospect responds, the message from the direct mail piece has to carry over to the web site. Make sure that your team coordinates all design activities between physical direct mail and your email and web content. The direct mail format utilized is important for any campaign, so include extra time in the planning stage to ensure the right format is chosen.

Other Keys to Successful Integration

Don’t forget to leverage the strength of social media.

As shown in Figure 2, the majority of businesses are now integrating social media into both online and offline marketing mechanisms. Gail Goodman for Entrepreneur.com stresses, “Your website is your online hub or headquarters, then think of social media sites as your satellites. They allow you to extend your business presence. When you post on social media, be sure to include frequent links back to your website, newsletter archive or blog, where interested people can learn more about your business.”⁶ Social media information can be included in direct mail, email, and on landing pages, but it should not distract from your main message (unless getting in touch with people via social networks is your main message). Your web page should include small links to your accounts on sites such as Twitter or Facebook. Email messages can include social media information at the footer of the message.



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Source / Methodology: MarketingSherpa Social Media Marketing Benchmark Survey / Fielded Nov 2009, N=2,317

Figure 2. Integration of Social Media with Other Marketing Mechanisms.

⁵ http://blog.verticalresponse.com/verticalresponse_blog/2010/08/qa-from-webinar-series.html

⁶ <http://www.entrepreneur.com/marketing/onlinemarketing/article206792.html>



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In the end, success is all about the metrics. But remember that online and direct mail mechanisms often use different metrics.

About The Ballantine Corporation

The Ballantine Corporation is a New Jersey-based company offering turnkey direct marketing creative and production services to companies nationwide. Family-owned since 1966.

For more information on how Ballantine can jump start your direct marketing campaigns, please contact Ryan Coté at ryan@ballantine.com or (973) 305-1500 x206. You can also visit Ballantine online at www.ballantine.com.