

Offline and On Point

Direct mail is alive and well as part of an integrated B2B marketing strategy

Digital is the focal point of just about every B2B marketing campaign today. But the impact that traditional offline media such as direct mail can have in engaging customers and prospects should not be discounted.

"Direct mail is becoming more sophisticated—it's all about measurement, segmentation and getting the right message to the right person," says Neil O'Keefe, senior vice president, CRM and member engagement at the Direct Marketing Association. "Opportunities exist to connect B2B direct mail with email, social and the web to deliver segmented, relevant pieces of mail."

Not surprisingly, both B2B and B2C direct mail volumes are down. According to the DMA, the total number of mail pieces handled by USPS in 2005 was 211,742,711, and direct mail accounted for 104,258,020 of those. Fast forward to 2015 and the total number of pieces dropped to 150,197,938, with 85,996,674 pieces of direct mail.

The overall US spend on direct mail production was \$45.6 billion in 2010, according to Winterberry Group. That rose only slightly over the next five years, to \$46.8 billion in 2015.

Direct mail accounted for 26% of 2016 B2B print marketing budgets, topped only by custom print at 29%, according to Outsell's 2016 B2B Advertising and Marketing Study. Next were magazines (17%); directories (11%); newspapers (10%) and newsletters (5%).

THE POWER OF MAIL

While print showed a decline to \$37.2 billion in B2B marketing spend, it is still relevant in B2B, notes Michael Balsam, vice president and leading analyst, Outsell. "Digital is out in the forefront but in B2B marketing print, collateral and events still carry a lot of weight," particularly in certain industries such as pharma and financial.

Indeed, the top 5 industries using direct mail were healthcare/pharma, financial/insurance, retail, B2B and publishing/media, according to the 2015 DMA/DemandMetric Response Rate Report.

B2B marketers are using a number of techniques to nurture leads, from multi-tiered email programs to print campaigns that tie back to digital efforts via QR codes and other variable printing techniques, notes Andrew Moravick, senior

research associate, marketing & sales effectiveness, Aberdeen Group.

"Of course, the follow-up directing recipients to a specific landing page with the call to action has to be there," he says. "Create touchpoints that are trackable."

Direct mail can work very well as part of an account based marketing strategy, says Lauren Goldstein, vice president, strategy and partnerships at Babcock & Jenkins.

"It adds value if it is relevant," Goldstein says. "Think about your own experience— how many emails

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IT'S ALL ABOUT SYNERGY

WAYS TO INTEGRATE YOUR EMAIL AND POSTAL CAMPAIGNS FOR BETTER ROI

Plan to use a combination of email and direct mail to reach your B2B target? That's the smart move many marketers deploy today. Keep these tactics in mind to get the most from your campaigns:

- **Use email to pique interest**, alerting your target that something important, time-sensitive or specially selected for them is on its way via the mail. Consider including an image or description of the package.
- **Use email to tell your target when a direct mail piece is scheduled to arrive**, so they can be on the lookout for it or inform the mailroom/administrative assistant. This makes the direct mail piece appear important.
- **Send an email to "prequalify" your target.** Those who respond to its small ask subsequently receive a more expensive piece of direct mail; non-responders get a less expensive piece.
- **If you have the email address of your target's gatekeeper** (executive assistant, office manager, administrative assistant), send an email saying an important package is on its way to their boss and requesting their assistance to make sure the boss sees it.
- **Use direct mail—especially a box, tube, padded jiffy bag or oversized envelope**—to attract the attention of your target once an email's given them the head's up.
- **In a direct mail piece, offer several ways to respond**, including via email, which some people find faster and more convenient than calling or sending in a reply slip.
- **Include something tangible in your direct mail**, as studies show we better remember things we touch. Let it underscore your message or help bring it to life. Even better, include something the recipient can't resist showing around or sharing (food is often a hit at the office).
- **Add an element to your direct mail that's designed to be kept on the desk** and serve as a reminder of your message, which can be particularly useful for the longer sales cycles in B2B, once emails drop below the fold and direct mail is recycled.
- **Send an email as a follow-up**, recapping the main message in your mail piece and reminding the recipient of the desired action.
- **Send an email with a last-chance message**, flagging the expiration date mentioned in the mail.
- **Use email as a cost-effective channel to distribute informative attachments** that can be shared among the various influencers and decision-makers whose buy-in is crucial for a sale. Your direct mail piece can lay the groundwork, and accompanying emails can expand on the message.
- **If possible, on your letter or email, cc others** in the target's company that are likely involved in the purchase decision. It will make your target pay more attention



to the message if they think a colleague (or superior) may ask them about it.

- **Use a follow-up email to sweeten the offer** from the direct mail, extend the expiration date, mention that many others have already responded, or ask if additional details would be useful.
- **Send non-responders to the direct mail piece a follow-up email**, and ask for an interim step to be taken (ex: go to a landing page to provide some specific detail about the target's situation, take a survey, or cast a vote). This positive action will be one "yes" in the right direction, as research shows getting a first small yes often leads to subsequent larger ones.
- **To keep postage costs lower (and email weights light)**, drive your targets to a landing page where they can access the additional information they'll no doubt need. Let them download product/service comparisons, access calculators, videos, and self-assessment tools, read case studies and testimonials, and invite others they need consensus from to visit.
- **To make the experience a custom one**, use a personalized url, which offers greater ease and relevance to the target.

Remember, your customers and prospects do not consume content from a single channel. So make use of multiple channels to ensure you reach them in the most effective way. Just keep your marketing message consistent so you don't create confusion or friction. And use each channel to its best advantage – their strengths are not the same.

Direct mail and email continue to be the staples of many B2B campaigns. Use them in tandem to deliver a powerful one-two punch. And watch your B2B response rates soar. —Nancy Harhut, chief creative officer, Wilde Agency

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did you delete this morning before you went to the office?"

Of course, direct mail is no longer a one and done proposition, she notes. "The intent should be to start a conversation that might continue in a different channel, such as email or on the phone."

"We recommend integration when it comes to using direct mail," adds Nancy Harhut, chief creative officer, Wilde Agency. "You need to test continually—there is always a way to improve something. Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Messages online and off should reinforce each other."

MAILBOX AWARENESS

Global recruitment outsourcing solution provider Cielo utilizes direct mail as part of its customer advocacy efforts.

"It's more for brand building than product marketing," says Bethany Perkins, director, central marketing, Cielo. "[When contracted], we become the talent acquisition process for our clients. Often, except for the main stakeholders people [at the client organization] don't know that they're working with an outsourcing company."

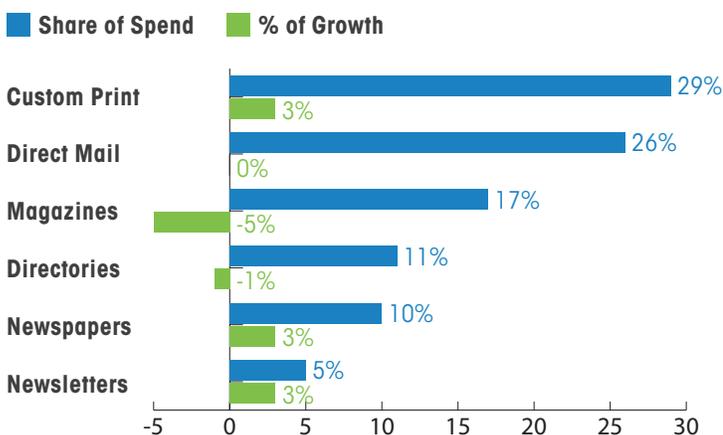
Direct mail helps create branded touchpoints for Cielo with their customers, she notes. It enables the company to reinforce the relationship and what they provide for customers with something tangible. Mailings might include a small gift or premium, and focus on thought leadership content.

"It's a creative way for us to give recognition and show we appreciate the relationship," adds Perkins.

Today, many B2B marketers are using mail as a tool to nurture leads further down the funnel and foster customer retention, notes O'Keefe.

By now everyone is familiar with digital retarget-

2016 B2B PRINT ALLOCATION AND GROWTH



Source: Outsell's 2016 B2B Advertising and Marketing Study



Direct mail to promote the DMA's &THEN conference will become more locally focused as the October event in Los Angeles draws near.

ing. That concept is taking off in direct mail, O'Keefe says—the circulation numbers are a lower count than the mega campaigns of the past but it can be a much more effective way to reach a targeted audience.

Reaching the right person within a target company with direct mail can be tricky—and expensive—in B2B, as individuals change jobs, adds O'Keefe. Increased targeting allows marketers to better integrate direct mail into digital campaigns and boost engagement.

The DMA uses direct mail itself to promote its annual fall conference &THEN, slated this year for Oct. 16-18 in Los Angeles.

In the DMA's biggest mail drop for the show this spring, URLs relevant to sessions and topics were interspersed throughout the creative in the brochure to drive potential attendees to relevant landing pages. A fold out schedule that recipients could take to the event or put on their office wall was also featured. Of course, notes O'Keefe, the challenge with sending out such a piece in the spring is that speaker schedules constantly get added to and updates, meaning it is essential to drive potential attendees to the website so they have the latest information.

As the conference draws closer, the DMA's direct mail strategy will become more localized. The 2015 &THEN was held in Boston, meaning the bulk of the fall mailings concentrated on the east coast. This year's Los Angeles locale means the association will concentrate mail efforts on the west coast.

"The goal is always to connect all of our marketing efforts and drive people to the website," says O'Keefe. ❗



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EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

THE TOP 5 B2B DIRECT MAIL TRENDS YOU NEED TO KNOW NOW

Just like finding that long-lost favorite piece of clothing that went out of style and wearing it proudly the next day and everyone raving about your fashion sense, smart B2B marketers are rediscovering the magic and effectiveness of good old direct mail and are using it as part of their marketing mix in more intelligent and creative ways than ever before.

Great trends always come back in style. The same can be said for this year's "newest" marketing trend: the redefinition of "retro" B2B direct mail. The resurgence of direct mail as a lead generation tool has many who deemed it a thing of the past scratching their heads. Why the sudden comeback of paper when the online generation is so prominent?

The reason for the return of B2B direct mail lies at the heart of any solid marketing effort—multichannel integration. With the explosion of digital, social media and content marketing, B2B direct mail as a stand-alone option rarely exists anymore. Instead, direct mail is timed alongside digital and other tactics in an effort to cut through the clutter and find more ways to reach target prospects. The key, of course, is consistent messaging and branding, reinforced across multiple touchpoints. In this way, online and offline tactics work in tandem to develop relationships with customers, generate leads and maximize ROI.

1. The First Impression

B2B marketers are also turning to innovative strategies for formatting and packaging to attract attention to their direct mail among the abundance of mailbox clutter. Creating engaging oversized mailings for B2B direct mail efforts has proven to be effective for generating high response rates, especially when compared to the miniscule response rates of the hundreds of emails flowing into your prospects' inboxes every day.

2. Personalization is Key

One-size mailing does not fit all. Current or lapsed customers will not want to receive the same message as prospective clients, so although segmenting is pricier, it is usually worth the investment. For example, my firm has crafted multiple dimensional mailings for our clients, such as a recent campaign for a national IT and finance/accounting staffing and consulting firm. The mailer featured a unique promotion-



al item, a compelling offer and a strong call-to-action. The insert was personalized to include the sales rep's contact info, and several different versions were developed to ensure messaging was tailored to multiple audience segments.

3. Appealing to the Senses

Appealing to the senses is another simple yet worthwhile strategy to catch the recipient's eye. Special velvety varnish coating for direct mailings makes the target want to touch and open it because it appears "soft" and naturally generates the image of prestige or high-profile content inside. Creative approaches that incorporate interactivity, such as surveys or contests tied into offers, are another way to generate interest and response.

4. Content is King

While the appearance of a B2B direct mail piece is important, the content of the mailing is also vital to the campaign's

response rate success. In order to ease contact for clients, the mailing should include all of your company's information, not just a website URL. The greater the variety of ways to get in touch, the better; whether it be by phone, email, landing page, or social media account. This allows the customer to contact you based on the outlet they are most comfortable using or on their level of interest.

5. The Power of Data

In an effort to stand out amongst the crowd, improved databases for B2B direct mail have resulted in better targeting than generalized mass mailings. Direct mail has produced a more effective outreach than ever before because a physical rooftop address is more readily

available than email addresses to specific persons. It is worth the spend in the end to garner a prospect's interest who would otherwise overlook or "junk" a targeted email in their daily overflowed inbox.

In today's heavily digital and ever-changing environment, it's the simple things that make good companies stand out. Including a direct mail piece in a campaign may attract customer attention for the sole reason of the sentimentality of receiving a piece of mail like "the old days." But you still have to employ smart strategies to break through the clutter. And most importantly, a single touchpoint will no longer cut it. Get creative with direct mail and embrace the power of multichannel campaigns to reach your B2B prospects and achieve success. —Grant A. Johnson, chief measurable marketing officer, Responsory

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