

Direct Mail Still Works

I found an interesting article at the Bloomberg website this morning. The lead paragraph said this: “Even as retailers debate the efficacy of social-media marketing on Facebook and Twitter, they have no doubts about the power of a decades-old technology to drive sales. The killer app is called email.”

There’s good news for you here. Direct mail still works! But you have to accept that direct mail is no longer limited to ink and/or toner printed on paper and delivered by the USPS. An email can be just as direct, and a lot less expensive.

That last part may not sound like good news, but it is—as long as you recognize that you’re not in the printing business, you’re in the business communication business. You have opportunity in pretty much every medium that a business can use to communicate.

Marketing Lesson

Part of my goal today is to teach you something about Marketing, and it starts with the objective of any direct mail program. OK, what might that be? To generate orders? To generate sales leads? To simply inform, or maybe to start any of those processes by drawing people to a website where they’ll take the next step?

Once the objective is understood, a Marketing Services Provider can put words and images together to support the objective. That process is largely the same, whether it results in a printed piece or an email that appears on a computer screen, a tablet or a cell phone. Sure, the layout may be different depending on the medium, but the message is probably going to be the same.

Now, who is that Marketing Services Provider? It could be the customer, providing their own Marketing Services. It could be a third party, an agency or designer. But here’s the most important question: *Why couldn’t it be you?* Why can’t you make good money selling direct mail that doesn’t involve ink, toner or paper.

Selling It

Well, you may be thinking, I’m not a Marketing expert. This goes way beyond my comfort zone. I would respond to that “problem” in two ways. First, start making yourself into a Marketing expert. Consider the lesson I just presented. Your first conversation with the customer is about their objective. Let’s say that the objective is to sell tickets to an event. Can that be done within an email? Possibly not, but an email can be used to get people to a website, where they can learn more and/or buy tickets. Picture a link near the top of the email that says: *Click here to buy your tickets.* Picture another link lower in the email that says: *Click here if you need more information.* Think about a subject line that will stand out in a recipient’s inbox. Think about graphics that will help tell the story. Think about the landing page(s) for those links, which may be another Marketing Service you can provide.

Second, let me share my definition of “expert” with you. It goes like this: *Whenever two people have a conversation, the one who knows more than the other one about whatever they’re talking about is the expert.*

By that definition, I think you’re probably the Marketing expert in most of your conversations with customers, especially the small businesses. Please consider that most business people want to grow their businesses but most of them don’t know how. Please also consider that the standard you’re held to is not Marketing Perfection. If you help someone to get better results than they would have otherwise, you have provided value—and it’s all the better if you made the sale based on their cost vs. objective and an ROI calculated against measured results. (OK, that may take you further from your comfort zone than you were when you started reading this, but I promise you, *you can learn all of this!* Remember, there was a time when you didn’t know anything about ink or toner or paper.)

Want to add something to your Marketing expertise right now? Go to your favorite search engine and search on “email outdraws Facebook.” That should take you to the Bloomberg article I reference earlier. And there’s plenty more marketing knowledge out there!