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Personalization and color provide significant direct mail benefit

Personalization and color are a great combination and produce a significant increase in direct mail responses. However, just because you use color, do not forget the intricacies of personalization.

Personalization assumes that you know something about the people to whom you are mailing. It can be an effective way to keep customers coming back, but be careful how you use personalized mail. When you presume too much too soon – what we call “presumptuous personalization” – you could do more harm than good.

Before you start digging deeper in your lists, don't forget data hygiene. Dirty data has errors. Some errors are as simple as redundant data or incorrect spelling and punctuation of names and addresses. Strive to have clean, error-free data; it can save you time and money and increase your response.

Here's a simple and safe strategy. Use a greater amount of personalization for house lists with customers who have purchased from you before. After all, you talk to them and they talk to you.

Online shoppers may have similar demographics, psychographics, and behaviors. You can create groups or segments of online shoppers and visitors that are both significant and manageable.

If you are unsure of the amount of personalization to use, test for relevance.



Today's customers demand that the products and information they are presented with be relevant. How do you feel when a company you frequent sends you a direct mail promotion with offers and recommendations for products that have nothing to do with previous purchases you've made or with the profile you've shared with them? Nothing drives a shopper away faster.

Knowing who your customers are and what they need is a requirement to compete in today's multi-channel world. Customers expect that you will know about them and their buying habits. So when you become familiar or even chummy with them, it is because they opened the door first.

Conversely, use less personalization when you haven't previously done business with someone. If you use too much personalization with people you do not know, your prospects may see it as an invasion of privacy. It's similar to assuming you can be on a first-name basis with the president and CEO of your biggest client before you have been formally introduced.

Regardless of how much personalization

you use, consider adding color. Studies show that adding full color to a static black and white direct marketing piece with minor personalization can increase the response. Some authorities say that color doubles, triples, and often quadruples response when used appropriately. For instance, marketing materials produced by variable-data digital color printing elevates your message, its impact...and ultimately, your sales.

Using color in prospect and customer mailings can give your mailer a bit more pizzazz and probably a few more seconds of attention that can make a difference. But remember the unpleasant four-letter word, “test”? Testing can answer your questions on the use of color and personalization to attract attention.

When you use personalization wisely and appropriately, it is a powerful direct mail tool that attracts attention, increases readership, and invariably boosts response. A full-color piece with deeper personalization based on purchase history can yield a response rate well above the standard direct mail response rate.

For added information on color and personalization, request our latest industry paper, “11 Pointers that will help You Navigate the World of Direct Mail Personalization.” It's free for the asking. Just call Adams Addressing at 800-631-MAIL (6245) or visit our request Web site www.sendreport.net and enter code number DMS602q.



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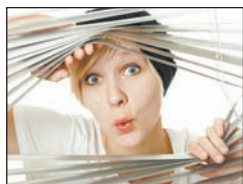
Since 1965, Adams Addressing Associates, Inc., a family owned business, has provided direct mail, printing and fulfillment services to thousands of businesses. We have based our growth on providing our customers with excellent service, working closely with them to assure a greater return on their investment, and taking that extra step to makes sure a job is done well.

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Obviously, the world has changed a lot since 1965. And today, change even occurs faster. Read our lead article, “Personalization and Color Provide Significant Direct Mail Benefit,” to see what is easily accomplished today. Then ask for our free industry paper, “11 Pointers that Will Help You Navigate the World of Direct Mail Personalization.” It's a sample of cross media communications at its best.

Then go to our Web site, click on the newsletter link and read more free tips. You can also sign up for the paper and email newsletter if you are not already a customer of Adams.

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Just Released!
Our latest essential industry paper:
“11 Pointers that will help you navigate the world of Direct Mail Personalization.”

Knowledge of Your Market Breathes Life into B-to-B Direct Mail

A good customer acquisition strategy for managing leads and filling the sales pipeline enables you to efficiently achieve results that are impossible with offhanded procedures. Further, collecting customer information and sharing it with other in-house departments for their analysis increases the impact and the ROI of your direct mail.

To get the most out of a customer acquisition strategy you need to consider a few extra techniques. If you enhance your acquisition strategy with some or all the techniques listed below, your customers will get more satisfaction from your products and services. A satisfied customer keeps the competition at bay.

Commit Getting better results requires teamwork between marketing, sales, customer service, and your other employees. You need representation from each area and a leader to manage the team as it defines the information and procedures necessary to generate and develop more business.

Consider that your company and your markets are unique and complex, so an impulsive, quick solution is unlikely to work well. Your team must be involved to plan, define, and implement a solution that works for you.

Invest It takes time and effort to learn more about customers' needs and to improve the procedures used by sales, marketing, and customer support. It takes even more time to locate and attract new customers. However, the investment is moderate and the payoff may occur sooner than you expect.

Integrate Collect information from marketing campaigns, customer interactions, and other sources of information about your customers and prospects. This may require test mailings, improved scripts for sales, customer surveys, and data collection during customer support. Develop a way to collect data at each step of the process and use the data to more effectively target your marketing and customer support.

Listen Think of your organization as a problem solver for your customers. Consider listening as a skill set for your employees. Make sure each team member is taught to listen. Teach them to probe for information needed to solve customers' problems.



Team members should initiate discussions with customers on how your company could more effectively serve them.

Learn how customers and prospects prefer to communicate: in person, over the telephone, by mail, or via email. Then use that information to fine tune your marketing and sales processes.

Respond Analyze the information that you collect: look for trends, market segments, and other insights that can help you fine-tune your business. Ensure that operations and customer service departments have access to the information and insights gained from the sales process. Create processes that ensure there is always follow up on any commitments made.

Close Prepare direct mail and other marketing and sales materials that address everything you learned in the previous steps. Explicitly cover any features or benefits in which the prospect or customer expressed interest or concern. Support your direct mail with other communication channels that customers prefer. Your written materials must be thorough, but targeted and easy to understand.

Serve Use the data that you collected to provide superior customer service. Strive to be viewed as a problem solver and even a collaborator rather than just another company looking forward to making a sale.

Furthermore, use the insights that you have gained to cross sell and to improve future interactions with the customer. Referrals and testimonials are powerful marketing tools. Earn them. Then use them.

Make the effort to try some or all of the techniques. Be selective to keep costs under control. Follow through rather than slipping back to less effective techniques. Expect to have questions and face roadblocks; you can work past them if you stick with it.



Five Methods to Build Customer Loyalty

It can take months or even years to build customer loyalty, yet you can lose it in seconds.

One of the best ways to build customer loyalty is to help your customers become more effective in their daily routines. Become a solution provider in the eyes of your customers—prepare your marketing and customer service in a caring way focused on their specific needs.

The following methods can improve the way you interact with customers and prospects. Everyone is unique, so take ownership of the ones you are most comfortable with.

1 Use questions to match your offers with customer needs.

Listening is a vital skill during the sales process. After introducing yourself, ask whom you are speaking with and how you can help. Then listen, looking for their needs that you might be able to address.

For example, if your company sells a netbook with an incredible battery life and the customer travels extensively to give presentations, that extended battery life might eliminate their worry about power failures. And the netbook's light weight might make it easy for them to tote around.



Successful Design *Cries Out* a Direct Mail Message

You've heard many times that "Copy is King," but design also plays an important role in communicating your sales message to customers and prospects. Your words are the message, but your design is the voice used to convey those words. It's not necessary to create award-winning design to be successful. It's only necessary for your design to be readable and functional.

Here are a few tips to make sure that your design is helping rather than hurting your sales message.

Always read the copy before you start designing. Good design and good copy work together, so it is vital for the designer to understand the product or service, the offer, and the action you want prospects to take when they receive your direct mail piece.

A good copywriter will often provide "thumbnail" sketches to show what he or she has in mind when writing the copy. But it's sometimes a good idea for the writer to consult with the designer before writing copy in case the designer has some ideas. This way the copy and design stand a better chance of working together.

Make the design postal-friendly. In order to arrive on schedule and with the lowest postage, the design must satisfy all postal rules and regulations.

Make the design reader-friendly. Direct mail is all about reading, so everything you do with design should be focused on making your mail easier to read and more engaging. If your prospects don't read it, they won't respond to it.

Use easy-to-read fonts. Use fonts large enough for a normal person to read at arm's length. Black type on white paper is ideal, but you can certainly use colors effectively as long as there is sufficient contrast to make the type clear.

Divide long lines into columns. Two or more columns are easier to read than long lines of type stretching across a wide page. Try to break headlines into logical thought units rather than using random breaks. Make phone numbers big and bold so they call attention to themselves.



Design letters to look like letters.

Many direct mail letters are over-designed, with justified margins and type that is more appropriate for modern art than for a simple letter. Perhaps more than anything else, this prevents your letter from looking personal.

A letter should look like a normal letter. It should appear to come from one person who is writing to another person. Think about how you write an ordinary letter. Do you "design" it? Or do you just type it and print it on letterhead? This is how most direct mail letters should look. They should be a one-to-one communication with nothing that appears to be from a designer.

Make reply forms easy to use. Forms should be functional rather than pretty. By the time someone gets to the reply form, they're ready to say, "Yes." Do not allow anything to get in the way of them filling out and returning the form.

Optimize each piece in your direct mail package. The envelope is meant to encourage openings. The letter presents the offer. The reply piece encourages response. And the brochure? That's a support piece. It should provide features, benefits, proofs, comparisons, technical details, and other information to back up the rest of the package.

Other pieces, such as lift letters or inserts, can go into a direct mail package, but they all follow the same basic guidelines—they must be readable and clear. Other formats, including flyers, self-mailers, and postcards, must abide by similar rules of readability and simplicity.

The best way to ensure you're getting good design is to allow a specialist to handle it. Our designers are direct mail specialists with experience that not all general-purpose designers have. Most designers think they can do direct mail, but the reality is that most cannot. Choosing the right designer can mean the difference between success and a crying shame.



2 Learn to manage a business relationship with anyone... no matter how different they seem.

Separate personal and business relationships—they are very different. In a business relationship, listen for the prospect's or customer's pain.

Arm yourself with a variety of solutions. When you offer a solution, back it up with features and benefits.

3 Maximize your time with customers or prospects who are interested in what you can do for them.

Marketing can create a demand for your company's products or services, so it is realistic to expect to achieve a sale or address a customer problem. However, it is unrealistic to expect to make a sale every time. To increase your sales, set quantifiable and attainable goals for increasing the time you spend with customers.

4 Secure commitments early and often.

Always be closing. It can be a commitment for a sale, an upgrade, or a plan for satisfying a disgruntled customer.

5 Get prospects to pursue the solutions you are most comfortable delivering.

Some solution providers are better than others, so becoming known as an expert in particular solutions can work to your advantage. Make sure everyone knows about your areas of expertise.

Start tracking what works well for you. You may find a gold nugget or two that makes for an excellent direct mail campaign.

Learning more about your customers' and prospects' needs increases your efficiency in serving them and enhances your customers' loyalty.