OneTouchPoint

5 B2C Direct Mail Best Practices:

A Marketer's Guide

In 2019, direct mail remains one of the most effective marketing tools in a marketer's arsenal, particularly in the business-to-consumer (B2C) market. The latest research from the Data & Marketing Association (DMA) shows it's actually become more effective in the digital age with average response rates **better than all digital channels combined.**[1]

When direct mail is at its best—personalized, valuable, unique, well-designed and relevant to the recipient—it can be powerful on its own. When combined with the latest in digital tools that bring data into the mix, it's even more effective. Marketers today have access to data that simply didn't exist years ago, enabling them to understand customers on a deeper level and create campaigns that resonate in new and meaningful ways.

And they're doing just that. Fueled by rich customer data, micro-targeting, and segmentation, response rates for house list direct mail rose a whopping 37% since 2015—reaching as high as 9% today. Email campaigns, by comparison, can expect response rates of 1% or less.

While times are very good for direct mail, the investment in a well-crafted campaign still requires marketers adhere to a few best practices. Read on for a summary of the essential direct mail best practices in 2019 (and beyond).

[1] Data & Marketing Association

1. Make It Personal (And Watch Response Rates Climb)

In 2019, consumers have come to expect personalized offers no matter what form they take. According to **recent research** from Marketo, **79% of consumers say they are only likely to engage with an offer if it has been personalized to reflect previous interactions the consumer has had with the brand.**[2]

While this raises the bar on what marketers are expected to deliver, getting personalization right makes it more than worth it.

- According to **Canon Solutions America**, adding a person's name and full color in the direct mail can **increase response by 135%.** With more sophisticated database information, this can **increase the response rate by up to 500%** versus not doing any of these things.[3]

- Research from the Data & Marketing Association (DMA) found that targeting customers on a one-to-one level **increases response rates up to 50% or more** compared to non-personalized mailers.[4]

> "...adding a person's name and full color in the direct mail can increase response by 135%."[3]

[2] Marketo
[3] Canon Solutions America
[4] Data & Marketing Association

Despite the expectation for personalized communications, only 30% of businesses are "very" or "extremely" satisfied with the level of personalization in their own marketing efforts, leaving the door open for those who want to seize on the opportunity to get a leg up on competitors.

Really though, in 2019, marketers are running out of excuses not to employ personalization. Dynamic content insertion via variable data printing has become a mainstay in commercial printing, allowing marketers to work with their print partners to create fully 1:1 mail pieces and put CRM data to work like never before.

And when it comes to price, the ROI of an effective personalized direct mail campaign can be well worth the investment in going the extra mile. **According to McKinsey**, **personalization can reduce acquisition costs by as much as 50%, lift revenues by 5–15%, and increase marketing spend efficiency by 10–30%.**[5]

So, what does personalization look like in action? Consider these three tips as a starting point for planning how you can use your own customer data to create something unique and valuable.

1. The Offer:
Use data on customers' past interactions with your company to customize the offer you send to individuals or segmented groups.

2. The Copy:
Great creative with employing a recipient's name and other information in fresh and unique ways to create a personal touch.

3. The Creative:
Use variable data to personalize images based on demographics, locations, interests, purchase history, and more.

[5] McKinsey

2. Localize Your Materials Based on Geography

While it often overlaps with 1:1 personalization, retailers, franchises, commercial services and other organizations with multiple locations are realizing the importance of engaging customers and prospects with localized customization.

CMO Council **recently revealed** that up to 50% of target audiences ignore brand messages if they're not localized for the native language, local jargon, and cultural references.[6] Just like 1:1 personalization, however, few marketers are actually employing localization. The CMO Council **found that** only 33% of marketers surveyed about using it reported their companies were doing well in adapting brand content for different markets, partners and geographies.[7]

The challenges keeping them from tackling localization included a few usual suspects:

- adapting brand content;
- speed of execution;
- ensuring quality and uniformity with brand guidelines; and
- workflow management, among others.

Fortunately, there are sophisticated marketing systems that tackle these exact challenges and enable marketers to get that leg up on competitors. End-to-end marketing execution platforms like U.Connect address all of these pain points, making it easy to manage, localize, create, order, and ship direct mail campaigns from one place. Learn more about how it works and check it out for yourself **here**.
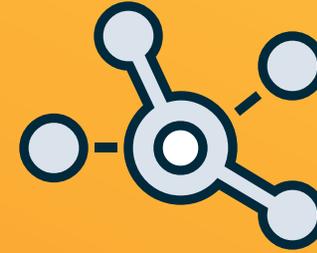
[6] CMO Council
[7] CMO Council

3. Use Direct Mail to Support Cross Channel Campaigns

Direct mail has proven itself to be a critical element for B2C cross channel campaigns, creating an online and offline multi-channel experience to nurture customers and prospects throughout the buying journey.

And while much has been said about "integrating direct mail into an omnichannel experience," far less has been said about what that actually looks like in practice.

Let's get specific by looking at a few examples where direct mail might actually fit into an omnichannel experience:

- **Creating a consistent story.** Direct mail is valued for its high impact, and in today's digital era, combining your offline direct mail and online digital efforts ensures you are getting in front of your prospects across channels. Adding an offline component, such as a late- stage postcard once a prospect has shown interest through a digital campaign can complement your efforts.

- **Re-engaging the disengaged.** Direct mail is also often used toward the end of a campaign to drive response among those who've disengaged. With an end-to-end marketing platform, these mailers can be automated to send after a set number of days since a prior touchpoint or to serve as a final high-impact call-to-action.

> **Research from SmartTouch** shows that ongoing drip campaign open rates are about 80% higher than single sends and average drip click through rates are 3 times higher. By adding an offline component to your campaign as well, you are expanding your reach, setting yourself apart from your competitors and meeting prospects in their channel of choice.[8]

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[8] SmartTouch

4. Use Customer Data in New Ways

Using CRM data to send targeted mail pieces is nothing new. But in 2019 (and certainly beyond), marketers are expected to dig further into this data to unlock useful insights that can further inform their marketing efforts and go beyond traditional targeting.

With the right data and tools for analysis, for example, marketers can create detailed profiles or personas based on purchase history. They could then create personalized product recommendation campaigns and use direct mail to promote commonly purchased items based on specific purchase histories. Combine this with the right marketing tool, along with a full service partner and a print and mailing provider, and this campaign can run in the background, fully automated.

Another common advanced use of CRM data for direct mail is the reactivation campaign. Direct mail has become an important tool for improving B2C retention and win-back rates when paired with a well-managed and integrated CRM. By moving customers into a direct mail reactivation campaign at certain points in the customer lifecycle, (usually when they've gone cold for a while), automation can be used to reactivate them with a high-impact mail piece.

5. Don't Forget the Basics

In addition to all the recent developments in direct mail, it's important not to forget the basic best practices of creating an effective mailer:

1. Provide Several Ways to Respond.

Convenience is more important than ever to consumers today. It's crucial to make it easy for them to engage with your message or offer in more ways than one. Direct mail pieces are most effective when they give readers a variety of engagement options to choose from. Web-savvy people tend to prefer a way to get to your website as quick and easy as possible through short URLs while the less tech savvy crowd still prefers to pick up the phone.

2. Call Attention to Your Call-To-Action.

Give your reader an opportunity to stop reading and actually act on your offer. While the message of your mailer must be compelling, you only have a few seconds to find your reader's eye with what to do next. Make the action, clear, bold, and easy to follow.

3. Keep It Short.

People live busy lives and spend limited time at the mailbox. Chances are, you'll have as much time to catch their attention and get your message across as it takes them to walk back from the mailbox so keep that in mind as you design your piece. If you've got a lot to say, break it up into a split format by pulling the key bullet points onto one side, and leave the chunks of text on the other. Simplicity and readability is key.

4. Include a P.S.

Believe it or not, the P.S. is the most read part of any mailer. With that in mind, you should take advantage of it to encapsulate your core message and restate your offer clearly and concisely. This is your last, but often most effective call-to-action. To be extra effective, include a deadline to your offer to get your reader off the fence and taking action.

Upgrade Your Direct Mail Marketing

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