

DIRECT MARKETING »

Direct mail continues to deliver

Research reveals that direct mail can still achieve exceptional results in driving response and action – among all age groups.

A recent study into consumers' attitudes towards direct mail reveals that some 79 percent of consumers act on companies' direct mailings immediately.

From *Letterbox To Inbox 2013* – an attitudinal print tracking study of 1,232 adults conducted by the Direct Marketing Association (DMA) – revealed that consumers view direct mail and other printed communications as essential to their overall experience of brands of which they are customers or in which they are interested. The survey also found that printed direct mail was 10 percent more successful than email in driving consumers to a brand's website. In addition, 34 percent of recipients claimed they searched online for more information about the featured product or company, while 26 percent kept the mailing for future reference.

Here are some more useful findings from the survey:

■ **Printed direct mail is viewed as reliable and trustworthy**
Respondents highlighted the essential role direct mail plays within their lives as consumers, with 56 percent saying they found printed marketing to be the "most trustworthy" of media channels.

■ **Younger consumers more likely to believe that direct mail is here to stay**
Twice the number of 18-34 year-olds (20 percent) believe that printed direct mail will never be replaced entirely by email, compared to consumers over age 55 (nine percent).

■ **Direct mail retained for future reference**
Some 48 percent of consumers surveyed said they had retained direct mailings for future reference, with 17 percent saying that they do so regularly.

■ **Consumers expect direct mailings**
One-third (33 percent) say they would have a negative view of a brand that did not offer printed communications.

THE 10 MOST SUCCESSFUL DIRECT MAIL INDUSTRIES

According to the Direct Marketing Association (DMA), consumers' reactions to direct mail can change depending on the sender. However, a high open rate doesn't necessarily lead to a high response. For example, nonprofit organizations often target donors or other interested parties in an effort to raise funds, but that mail is not always read immediately – or at all. While museums have an open rate of 56.7 percent, only 18 percent of recipients stated they intended to respond to the solicitation. Churches, on the other hand, achieved a lower open rate (53.4 percent) but a higher response rate of 23 percent.



INDUSTRY	OPEN RATE (%)	INTEND TO RESPOND (%)
Museums	56.7	18
Union/Professional	55.9	10.5
Church	53.4	23
Veterans	52.0	18.6
Educational	50.2	9.7
Medical	49.1	8
Charities	41.8	13.8
Political	32.9	9.8
AARP	48.1	12.7
Nonprofit	46.5	14.1

MOBILE AND TABLET MARKETING »

SECOND SCREEN STRATEGIES

How mobile phones and tablets are accentuating the TV experience.

We may not want to admit it, but whether it's via our tablet or our cell phone, we've become tethered to technology. Now, mobile devices are apparently changing the way we do one of the laziest things in life – sit and watch "the tube."

According to *Business Insider*, nearly half of all Smartphone users and tablet owners said they have a phone or tablet in their hands while watching television. Many of us use these "second screens" to tell friends what we're watching, to kill time during commercials or simply to search for more information on whatever we're watching.

Rather than view mobile devices as a distraction from their advertising, media companies have discovered that your phone or iPad can complement their marketing efforts. As you might imagine, it has changed how they communicate to you, the viewer. The timeliness of live broadcasts like *X Factor* or *American Idol*, for example, allow the audience to control the outcome through voting as well as learn more about competitors and view more content that doesn't make it to air. While many of us may agree that election coverage on television networks has enough talking head pundits, more and more space has been devoted to hearing what the voters at home watching have to say in real time via Twitter and other forms of social media.

Television networks are joining the fray as well, realizing that apps and online conversation between fans can drive viewer loyalty long after an episode has ended. To take advantage of second screen users, USA Network created a large social media campaign to support the debut of re-runs of the hit show *Modern Family* in the fall of 2013. The network even sat down with the show's co-creators and its writers to develop content for second screen users.

So why all the effort to connect with a guy eating potato chips on his couch? Advertisers know that a TV viewer holding a mobile device is just a few clicks from a purchase.



SOUND BITES

OVERHEARD RECENTLY

"In order to be irreplaceable, one must always be different."

COCO CHANEL
Fashion designer and entrepreneur

"If you're not failing every now and again, it's a sign that you're not doing anything innovative."

WOODY ALLEN
Script writer, actor and movie producer

"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL
Former British Prime Minister

"Your most unhappy customers are often your greatest source of learning."

BILL GATES
Microsoft Founder

VIDEO MARKETING »

3 GOLDEN RULES FOR SOCIAL VIDEO

An entry level guide to creating compelling video content



According to YouTube, more than one billion users visit its site each month, spending four billion hours watching videos. It's estimated that online video will account for more than half of all online consumer Internet traffic by 2016. Today, consumers have a tolerance of about two seconds for a video to load. The good news: they desire videos that inform them about your product. Here's how to deliver it to them.

1 Have a strategy, Spielberg

Do you know what you call an online video that no-one sees? A brand exercise. You may have an idea for a hilarious social media video that you believe spreads the gospel of your brand or product perfectly, but before you tackle the creative execution, ask yourself a few simple questions: What is your goal? Who is your target audience? What action do you want them to take? Being prepared sounds trivial, but your goal isn't just to entertain; it's to connect with potential consumers. Creating a social video shouldn't be about what you want to create, but what your viewers want to see.

2 Be prepared to distribute

Without a plan to distribute your content, you're likely to overload the YouTube servers. Attaching a hashtag to posts related to your video will allow you to track what people are saying about it and get feedback. Don't forget to utilize online media who cover your industry. They might publish your video for you. The same applies to print media members and key influencers who are always looking for content to share with their audience. Very often, your retailer partners will be starved for content to post on their own social media channels.



3 Review, review, review

When you land on your creative direction, ask yourself again if it answers the questions you posed above. Does the content direction appeal to your target audience and answer questions they might have about your product or brand? The beauty of online video is that you can develop it to connect on a personal level with a specific audience, making them more likely to view it. Everyone else doesn't have to "get it." If you've set clear goals around the questions you asked at the beginning, your creative output should align with your objectives. The best part is you'll be able to measure whether or not it did.



MINI INTERVIEW » STEPHANIE ROGERS

How to engage an empowered consumer

Stephanie Rogers is the Executive Vice President of Account Management, Technology & Media at Boston-based marketing firm PARTNERS+simons. She has worked with clients such as Chartis Insurance, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Tufts Medical Center, General Motors and Nextel. She sat down to answer a few questions on how she works with brands to construct today's modern marketing campaigns.



"Most marketers have a wealth of content already in existence throughout their organization"

Q. Given that marketers are now finding that traditional marketing approaches are no longer resonating with today's consumer, what messaging can break through?

SR: Relevant content that educates and/or informs can still get consumers' attention. A steady stream of content distribution can do wonders for your search engine optimization, making it easier for people to find you.

Q. Where can companies find enough content to create this steady stream of news?

SR: Most marketers have a wealth of content - or content ideas - already in existence throughout the organization. It's a matter of finding it and incorporating it into the marketing workflow. Customer service reps have frontline stories, product managers can help

create a white paper or infographic, and conversations from your own social media page can be turned into an article or story. We start with an internal audit of everything our clients have and build a content calendar. Start small and get a feel for your specific audience's appetite.

Q. Given this approach, do brands need to think more about campaigns that last a shorter amount of time and can shift on the fly?

SR: The biggest difference today is that companies need to consider context when putting together a marketing program. Today, people

actively seek product info and ask friends/peers for advice. They may be looking for this information at home, on their mobile or at a retail location. For that reason, it is crucial that we consider the context of their browsing so that we can tailor their brand experience accordingly. Someone searching for a store address on their mobile phone will expect and tolerate a different experience than someone who is watching the Masters on TV.

Q. Compared with 10 years ago, how does having an open dialogue with consumers across a number of mediums change how a marketing strategy gets set?

SR: We view marketing as a strategic corporate asset, not just another advertising campaign. That means developing relevant marketing programs that can live and evolve year-over-year, versus season-to-season. To do that, you must regularly measure performance - through brand studies, consumer feedback and traditional direct-response metrics - then adjust accordingly. The tactics will change over time to accommodate new products, channels, or market dynamics, but only through a long-term, dedicated effort to brand building can you truly build brand equity.

DIGITAL MARKETING »

Understanding THE NEW GOOGLE

Five things inbound marketers need to know about the search engine's new algorithm, Hummingbird.

Increasingly, websites that appear at the top of Google's search results are those that have a high number of social signals - likes, shares, tweets and plus-ones. Here are five key tactics to drive your website up the organic rankings.

1 MAKE YOUR CONTENT USEFUL
Appearing at the top of a Google search is no longer just for keyword maestros. Google rewards good quality content. After all, the company's ultimate goal is to help you find what you're looking for. "Webmasters can improve the rank of their sites by creating high-quality sites that users will want to use and share," Google says. Useful content is also a proven way to establish an upstanding reputation in the eyes of your users. Most important: keep your content up-to-date and make sure every page has a purpose. The more relevant your content, the more it gets shared and the better you rank.

2 MAKE SURE YOU HAVE WORKING, USEFUL LINKS
Google doesn't enjoy stumbling across broken links on your website. In all likelihood, the overall health of your links is a good indicator of how well managed and up-to-date your site is. Broken links also make your site less likely to be shared. Google's PageRank is one of the ways the company has improved the relevance of search results for users. It assumes that

more important pages receive more links from other sites and works by counting the number and quality of links to a page to determine a rough estimate of the importance of the site's pages.

3 KEYWORDS STILL COUNT
Google recently stopped sharing keyword data searches in Google Analytics with websites. Businesses can no longer track how users who come to their site via a specific keyword search interact with their website. While content may be king, remember that people still use keywords to search for that 'regal' content. Those words help people learn what you do and what content you deliver. If you provide good content and your keywords reflect your content, searchers will find you and engage with you.

4 BE PREPARED TO BE SHARED
It's imperative that you make it easy for users who engage with your dazzling content to pass it on. Remember, people share content that makes them look smart, funny and cool. But it's not enough to create a hilarious YouTube video or write stirring blog posts. Before you create, define the target audience you intend to reach and the type of content they'll engage with, then map out the channels best utilized to reach them. For starters, include share buttons on your content and make sure your content is viewable on all kinds of devices, especially mobile.



"While content may well be king, remember that people still use keywords to search for that 'regal' content."

5 BE POPULAR WITH OTHER SITES
Google likes the popular kids. As stated earlier, the more places on the web that have links to your site, the better you'll perform in searches. So how can you ensure that your site is linked to by other, reputable websites? Encourage companies that you do business with to link to your site. It doesn't hurt for you to praise them on your site as a client or partner. If articles on news sites or blogs mention your site, be sure to let them know that you'd love for them to link to your site.

THE TOP MARKETING/CREATIVE BLOGS YOU NEED TO READ

ADAGE.COM
Looking to keep abreast of what's going on in the ad industry? This is a good place to start. There's no shortage of content at *AdAge.com*. Get your fill of webcasts, research reports, blogs and columnists. You can even take inside tours of marketing agencies in the Agency Digs section.

ADFREAK BLOG PAGE
AdWeek's blog page touts itself as the best and worst of advertising, branding and design. You'll find videos of the latest ads and online videos causing a stir, along with short stories commenting on them. *Adweek.com* covers news, media and branding. It's also home to a substantial video page that houses interviews with marketing leaders.

ALLTHINGS.DIGITAL.COM
AllThingsDigital.com is a site devoted to technology, the Internet and media and delivers news, analysis and opinion on all of those. In addition to penning solid news features, the deep editorial staff reviews a variety of tech products from iPads to apps. The headline writing is snappy, making sometimes-dry topics easy to read. Check out the video section for succinct reviews of new tech products.

DESIGNTAXI.COM
It's not the Cash Cab, but designers looking to keep up with cutting edge executions in their space will love Design Taxi. The site covers the latest and greatest from the world of illustration, infographics, architecture, packaging, video... and more. There's even a page where you can create and display your own design portfolio for potential employers to peruse.

FASTCOMPANY.COM
Fast Company magazine's website certainly can't be categorized as a blog. It's way too substantial for that. Marketers flock regularly to the site because the content - both online and in print - is unique. *Fast Company* has a way of turning what essentially are case studies on interesting topics into entertaining features that you simply can't put down.

MARKETINGPROFS.COM
Saying it delivers "real-world education for modern marketers," *MarketingProfs* offers relevant, timely features, podcasts, tutorials and even a short jobs board. There are also sections on professional development and upcoming events. A Pro Membership gets you access to case studies, pro seminars, special reports and their 10-minute podcasts.

MASHABLE.COM
If you follow any marketers on Twitter, you've undoubtedly come across a tweeted story or two from *Mashable*. Click on one. Their features are entertaining - hence the social sharing - yet still ultra-informative. Social media, technology, entertainment news...you name it, they cover it, and there's no shortage of content on the site.

PSFK.COM
New York-based *PSFK.com* boasts a wealth of feature stories designed to "inspire creative business." Their features unearth some of the more original tactics brands are using to promote themselves. They also offer highly in-depth reports on a variety of different media topics, which can be downloaded for \$150.