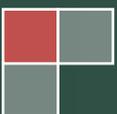


12 Reasons For Using Direct Mail In Your IT Marketing Mix

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Held IT Companies And Independent IT Professionals

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[Blog entry](#)

Have you ever heard that burials in the US alone deposit 827,060 gallons of embalming fluid – formaldehyde, methanol, and ethanol – into the ground every single year?

If you want to go environment-friendly and opt for cremation, the process pumps dioxins, hydrochloric acid, sulphur dioxide and carbon dioxide into the air.

Yet, based on my experience as a former gravedigger, embalmer assistant and crematorium attendant, I find cremation a more environment-friendly method.

In some countries, doctors get paid extra, stylishly called ash cash, if they can convince their patients to cremate their dead relatives.

I've mentioned this interesting fact because whether you choose online or off-line lead generation, they both cost money, but one can bring you better return on your investment.

We may be living in the Internet age, but if you want to contact boardroom-calibre decision-makers, then direct mail, a.k.a. snail mail, may well have some pleasant surprises for you.

Let's see some of them...

No Spam Filter

While direct mail goes through only one level of filtering from the gatekeeper to the addressee, emails have to put up with the ever more relentless and merciless spam filters. And while there are some people who eyeball through their spam filters every day, like me, most people don't.

So, many emails don't even get to gatekeepers. They disintegrate on impact with the company's server.

Open-Minded Reading

People are more likely to open and read snail mail pieces than emails when they come from people that they don't know.

Since they know there is no urgency and they can read those letters whenever they want to, they read those letters with their guards down. Their innate suspicion, scepticism and cynicism melt away.

As a result, they also become more anticipant, receptive and reflective of the content of your letter.

Why?

Because on a daily basis, most people receive over 200 emails a day but only one or two snail mails per week. And even those two are bills. So, when a letter doesn't look like a bill, people are eager to see what the cricket it is.

They know they are in full control of the process of digesting those letters' contents, and if they don't like it, they can bung it in the nearest rubbish bin.

You Can Enclose Things

Sending an attachment with your first email is a big no-no.

But sending something tangible with your first letter only improves your response rate.

But don't send videos on DVDs or on USB drives. This is your first contact, and since your recipients are concerned about viruses, they would be hesitant to play the DVD or stick pen drives into their computers.

As the experts say, "Add a lump to your letter and get a bump in response." And in some cases, that lump can bump your response as much as 13-fold. That's pretty neat.

Minimum Competition

With the proliferation of email, there is very little competition in people's attention through their mail boxes.

Of course, if your letter screams that it's some sort of promotional piece, you're doomed, but you can do many things to camouflage your letter as a friendly piece of postal work.

With an email, your message has to stand out like a trombonist in a punk rock band¹, simply because the competition is pretty fierce. Yes, it's doable, but with competition your chances are lower than a miner frog's arse.

With snail mail, however, if you send your letter in a large² plain (no gimmicks and stupid teasers) white hand-addressed (in blue ink) envelope with real 1st class stamps on them, then it's almost guaranteed to get opened.

The big mistake many people make is that they send their letters as bulk with postal meter stamps on them. Since they scream "junk", most people throw them away without opening them.

I don't know about you, but being very very far from a handsome guy, if I wanted to find a date, I would go to a place which is about to burst at the seams with good-looking women but there are just a few guys here and there.

Maximising supply and minimising demand and competition.

Being an introvert, my chances are still pretty low, but at least they are borderline existent.

Snail Mail Is Kept

While unwanted emails get instantly deleted, snail mail pieces tend to hand around.

If they are well-written, people show them to their colleagues, supervisors and managers.

All in all, they don't get thrown away but circulate in the office and their contents percolate in people's minds.

¹ [Alice Donut: War Pigs \(Black Sabbath cover\)](#)

² [You want to put your letter in the envelope unfolded.](#)

Precision

For some reason, in general, people put more effort into creating printed pieces than emails. Many IT companies hire copywriters to write snail mail pieces, but most emails are written by interns, secretaries or available tech people who used to write poetry during their school years. And I haven't even mentioned those poor souls who hire journalists or English teachers to write their collateral pieces. Anyway, more precisely crafted pieces mean better response.

It's Not The Cost, But The Result, That Matters

Many IT companies ignore snail mail because it costs money. Well, yes. And email is free but gets only a fraction of the result as snail mail.



Source: Wikipedia

If you wanted to win Formula 1 race, would you enter with a Trabant³ just because it's a lot cheaper than a Ferrari?

Yes, it's cheaper, but would the 100 km/h top speed give you any chance of winning?

Having driven my parents' Trabant in Hungary many years ago, I can tell you from first-hand experience, you couldn't win.

Imagine you send out 3,000 letters. A three-letter sequence to 1,000 carefully selected prospects. Mailing 3,000 letters costs about \$6,000, but it would cost you much more, both in money and time, to have live salespeople call on 3,000 buyers.

If you get one client out of the 3,000, you recover your costs a good few times over.

Let's see some stats...

It takes nine calls to reach a contact. Anyone. The connection rate is 12%. That is, 82% of the calls end up on voicemail, most of which is ignored and instantly deleted.

¼ of the 12%, that is, 3% turn into appointments, which is still a far cry from a real paid project. Let's be general and say 10% of your appointments end up in sales. That's a whopping 0.3%.

And it can take over 10 hours of calling back and forth to secure one single appointment. And even when you have the appointment, either you or your buyer may realise that you're not a

³ A small compact car of some 600 kg, made in the former East Germany and sold in all the Iron Curtain countries. It was made of 100% recycled materials and had a 600 cc 2-stroke, 2-cylinder engine outputting a grand total of 26 horsepower. The top speed was about 100 km/h, which the Trabant could reach in 21 seconds. The fuel consumption was /about 40 miles / gallon.

good fit to work together. So, all that time is down the toilet.

So, now you're back to square zero and keep dialling or banging on doors.

Easy Testing

Each element if a snail mail campaign can easily be tested. You take a small (minimum 2,000) number of addresses, and split test them.

That allows you to tweak every element of your campaign.

You can test envelope size, shape and colour, headlines, salutations, offers, postscripts, letter copy, and various other elements of the letter.

Yes, you can test email as well, but not knowing whether your email gets stuck on the gatekeeper or the spam filter, testing is a tad less than straightforward.

And once you have a great letter with all the additional bits and bobs that produce great results, you're set.

All you have to do is just sending the letters again and again.

Pretty Accurate Timing

If you offer is time-sensitive, you can make sure, buyers receive your offer around your desired time.

You can experiment how long it takes to receive a response from your mailings if you drop your letters into a specific mail box.

Mark the date and time of mailings, write down the days and times when your favourite mail box gets emptied, so from these data you make some rough calculations as to when to mail your letters.

Snail Mail Clients Pay You More

I don't know why, but the general perception is that only established, "quality" businesses use snail mail.

It means, if you get some clients through snail mail, by virtue of your approach, they regard you as a more reliable, more established and more trustworthy IT provider than someone from whom they've received only emails.

All in all, they regard you as a respected authority as opposed to a fungible vendor.

If this is the case, you might as well use this fact to your advantage.

Snail Mail Penetrates Deeper In The Organisational Bureaucracy

When you send an email, it almost always goes to a flunky who protects the Big Cheese from

despicable lowlifes, like marketers or salespeople.

But before it even reaches the flunky, there is a good chance it gets caught by the email programme's spam filter.

At least, with snail mail, you can send it again and there is a repeat chance of reaching the Big Cheese.

Yes, first it goes to a flunky, but what do you think a flunky does with a plain white envelope addressed to the Big Cheese and the sender is a person's name not a company?

So, the flunky gives it to the Big Cheese.

You Can Optimise Your Deal Flow Based On Demand

You can increase or decrease your mail volume according to how much you need work.

But there is some caution here.

This letter is the very first contact with new buyers. And since you sell premium products and services, buying from your company is not an impulse purchase.

It means it takes some time between first contact and signed contract.

Especially if you add the length of your own client onboarding period that can be as long as a full month.

But maintain your mailing high enough, so there is very high demand for your services with an impressive waiting list.

There may be temptation to mail as few pieces as possible in order to lower costs, but when you consider the value of a waiting list, you may be able to justify the cost of extra mailing.

Stay Under Your Competition's Radar Screen

When you send emails, any Tom, Dick and Harry can pose as potential clients. Then they can reverse-engineer your best ideas and use them against you. That's not a good idea.

When you do your prospecting off-line, you can do it in almost 100% secrecy. After all, you send your letters to carefully selected companies, and it's virtually impossible to sneak onto that list.

On Summary

Just to make sure you can put direct mail into the right frame of reference, let the statistics speak for themselves...

- 50% of consumers say they pay more attention to postal mail than e-mail. That means if you insist on communicating entirely using e-mail and do not use Direct Mail you may be missing out on HALF the sales opportunities of any given campaign; (Epsilon Channel Preference Study).

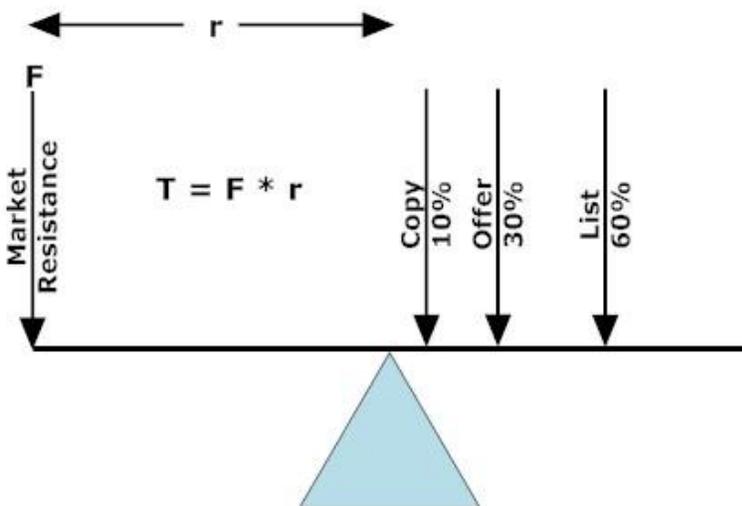
- 60% of consumers say they enjoy checking their mailbox and actually receiving mail. There is a positive emotional pay-off finding mail in their mailbox; (Epsilon Channel Preference Study). In addition, consider this – 65% say they receive too many emails on a daily basis – more than they even have time to open. (Epsilon). A fast growing percentage of people express frustration and resentment at email marketing even from sources they have a good relationship with (E-Commerce Alliance Research)
- In 2011, the total volume of first class mail was depressed by 7% but direct mail for commercial purposes was up 3%. (Target Marketing 12/2011)
- More than 12 BILLION Catalogues are mailed annually. (Direct Marketing Association Statistical Fact Book) Would companies keep mailing BILLIONS of printed catalogues if their testing indicated they could replace them with online media? Investment in direct mail for advertising rose by 5.8% from 2010 – 2011 encompassing \$48 BILLION (DeliverMagazine.com)

Think about it – during a recession, spending on direct mail rose. Keep in mind, huge numbers of companies stupidly cut back and switched to online media, so to create this increase the remaining users of direct mail had to DRAMATICALLY increase usage.

- 98% of consumers retrieve their mail from the mailbox the day it is delivered and 77% sort through it the same day (USPS data reported in DM News February 2011)
- According to a 2004 Direct Marketing Association, response to snail mail was almost 40% higher than response to email. The same study also showed that snail mail generated over 100% more buyers to stores, restaurants and websites than emails.
- According to a recent U.S. Postal Service study, 67% of costumers believe snail mail is more personal than email.

One more point...

Different factors represent different value in your direct mail package.



$T = r * F$, where T is torque, r is displacement, and F is force.

There are three forces.

While displacement (r) for every component is given, the force (F) is represented by the care and sophistication with which each component is put together.

The effectiveness of each component is represented by the torque (T) it can create on the seesaw.

Market Resistance (MR): This is the market inertia that has to be overcome in order to sell to that market. MR has maximum displacement (r), so it can easily generate maximum torque to resist your marketing.

List Value (LV): List value is the highest contributor (60%) to your overall marketing success.

The force is determined by the quality of the list. In-house responsive lists are much better than compiled lists purchased from some list brokers.

Offer Value (OV): Offer Value is the second highest contributor (30%). Its force is determined how your offer is matched to your target market. If you have an amazing running shoe offer to paraplegics, then you're doomed. You also have to match timing and the form of media. **Copy Value (CV):** Copy Value is about 10% of your overall success. If your list is not so great and your offer is a bit rushed, then you need kick-arse copy to market and sell successfully. But if your list and offer are under a certain standard, no copy can save you.

And how much do images contribute? Almost nothing.

There is a difference between image and image. A well-thought-out process visual that supports your message can be priceless. Stupid stock images of people and jam-packed server rooms are worthless.

I hope it helps a bit in your decision.

In the meantime, don't sell harder. Market smarter and your business will be better off for it.

[With victory on high...](#)



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