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Best Practices for a Successful Direct Mail Campaign

1. Define your Target Audience

In order to establish brand loyalty, you need to gain the devotion of your target audience. No matter how developed your branding strategy may be, the fact is that it is pretty useless without first defining and addressing your target audience. It's imperative to have a clear understanding of your customer profile in order to develop a brand that addresses the suitability for their needs, influences, and motivations.

To develop a clear understanding of your target audience, you must take into consideration the behaviors and attitudes of your customers. Ask yourself a series of questions about your target audience in order to develop a defined customer profile.

Why would they want to purchase your product and how are they relating to that product?

Determine how the product benefits them and their motivations behind purchasing your product.

Ask yourself what features they may be looking for in a particular product and why they would choose one product over another. It is important to determine their beliefs about your product and how one product would become more valuable to them than another.

Finally develop an understanding of their purchasing behavior. With what frequency are they purchasing your product, and what is motivating them at that moment to purchase?

By answering these questions this will enable you to clearly define your customer profile and identify their beliefs, values, and behaviors. You can then develop a product and communication that addresses the customer and is suitable for them.

It is also important to develop a customer base that is **highly targeted** and more narrowly defined. This makes it easier to define the customer profile and address and meet the client's specific needs. Narrowly defining your customer base will

enable you to develop a branding strategy that has messaging and tactics that will entice your specific customer. In order to help you more narrowly define your customer base, write a **target market description** that is as specific and explicit as possible.

Another thing to consider when defining your customer profile is who the **buyer** is and who the **purchaser** is. For example, the buyer may be an engineer, and the purchaser is the Purchasing Agent. A strategy must be developed that will reach both separate groups and encourage them to buy the product.

Finally, take the time to do a little bit of research on your target audience. Compile demographic surveys, census data, and market research reports in order to establish some assumptions about your consumers. Once you have clearly defined your customer profile, write a statement on the type of relationship you would like to have with your customer. By clearly defining your target audience and establishing what type of relationship you would like to have with them, you are setting the groundwork for a devoted and loyal customer.

Develop your Own List

More than anything else your list will determine your success. Create your own direct mail list by compiling contact information from various customer relationships. The list could include sales inquiries and interested parties, as well as potential, current, and past customers. The list can be developed by capturing contact information on your company Website, or through sales calls, past advertising campaigns, and networking events. Constantly refining your database to make sure it is up-to-date is another important element to creating a clean and highly targeted list. A clean up-to-date mailing list is a prerequisite for encouraging a good response rate.

If your database is broad based, it may be a good idea to **segment** it. Split the database into logical groupings and then send each an ad which is relevant to their particular group. Split your database by vertical marketing, existing or past client, or by specific target audiences. Each audience has their own needs, influences, and motivations that will encourage them to respond to a particular ad. Customizing an ad to fit a particular group will help to elicit the response you are looking for.

Include an Action item

Drive results by including a strong **call to action** in the direct mail ad that encourages a direct response from potential customers. Direct mail campaigns are most successful when a valuable incentive is offered to the user. This incentive could come in the form of a promotion, a free giveaway, or the offering of a value-added material such as a white paper.

The direct response component should include contact information, sending them to the company Website or to a call center to learn more about your products and services.

Design Eye Catching Creative

It's equally important to design a direct mail ad that is eye-catching and visually compelling in order to gain the attention of the reader. The ad will need to be unique and enticing in order to jump off the screen and grab the attention of the reader. The goal is for the receiver to take a closer look at the ad, not immediately discard it. Your use of colors, inclusion of catchy phrases, and creation of unique and compelling graphics will all help to ensure that your ad will create the buzz you were looking for.

Integrate Direct mail with website

A direct mail campaign combined with an online campaign, such as an email marketing campaign, can be a most effective means of reaching your target audience. Exposure in both online and offline mediums will help to encourage product recognition and awareness. The combined efforts of both an online and offline advertising campaign will result in a reinforcement of the brand, brand awareness and recognition, and loyalty among consumers.

One thing to keep in mind during the creation of an integrated advertising campaign is to **keep all creative consistent**. The email and direct mail ads should have a consistent look and feel, contain the same advertising messaging, and similar visual identities. In order for the potential consumer to recognize your brand, the two ads must be consistent, encouraging recognition and loyalty among consumers.

Track & Measure Results

In order to determine whether or not an advertising campaign was successful in encouraging a direct response, you must be able to track results. Include a toll free number or a Website URL to track the campaign's success. The toll free number should be specific to that particular campaign so that you are able to count the number of responses. The Website URL should also be unique to that particular advertising campaign. A unique landing page can be created whose users are only receivers of the direct mail piece. Count the number of unique visitors to the site and the number of phone calls to the toll free number in order to determine response rates. Compare and contrast the response rates with past advertising campaigns and determine how the creative or direct response component can be changed in order to achieve better results in future campaigns.