

PRODUCTION

BY ROBERT SALTA

Messaging Trends: Leveraging Technology and Customer Data



The day when digital print technology will allow true one-to-one communication on a large scale—without breaking the bank—is rapidly approaching. Think

about all the new technology on display recently at Graph Expo 2012 to understand just how far the industry has come. Not long ago, offset printing presses dominated the exhibition. Today, inkjets and color digital presses abound. High-speed inkjet printing can produce variable text and full-color images at speeds of 400 feet per minute.

Technology supports the shift toward more relevant, variable, data-driven, one-to-one, high-volume direct mail. This technology revolution could not come at a better time, as many marketers are finding primitive “Dear Friend,” one-size-fits-all messaging yielding ever-shrinking margins and response rates. Reversing this trend with the “same old bag of tricks” is impossible.

Data offers marketers greater insight into the attitudes and response behaviors of their target audiences, allowing them to get the right message to the right audience. Better still, data is becoming more affordable from a production point of view.

Today’s sophisticated technology allows scoring of each customer in a database to discern insights as to the type of message or offer most likely to motivate the desired buying or giving decision; the optimal communication channel for reaching out; and the preferred timing of the contact. Combining these insights with historical data allows message development that is more likely to prompt the desired consumer response. Then, technology allows marketers to input the derived insights into personalized, relevant packages.

Analysis can reveal many things about your universe of customers and donors. For example, it can uncover that:

- *Customer A has strong family values, enjoys entertaining, and values trust-based relationships.*
- *Customer B is an outdoor enthusiast who is creative and concerned about humanity’s well-being.*
- *Customer C puts image and symbols of success above all else and lives in the moment.*
- *Customer D is an early-adopter of new technology who prefers online, mobile, and social media communications.*
- *Customer E is a prudent shopper who buys American and likes incentive offers.*

Imagine the cut-through, creative strategies possible when marketers know the specific attitudes, receptiveness, and response behaviors of their ideal customers! Savvy direct marketers are already elevating messages and their appeal with these techniques. Most are finding that distinctive messages, tailored to maximize receptivity across a mass audience, establish stronger customer-donor connections.

This added layer of messaging requires more sophisticated segmentation and creative strategies, but the payoff can be significant. We have seen clients experience nearly a 50 percent lift in response in the top cell, with an overall lift of 10 percent in response, and over 25 percent increase in ROI, just by identifying key motivators and writing more relevant, intimate messages.

More successful communications require a better understanding of available technology and the individuals within your database. In combination, data and technology will allow you to develop and execute a messaging strategy that creates lasting customer connections.

Robert Salta is a principal of DirectMail.com, a market leader in Intelligent Direct Marketing Solutions that elicit a “Yes!” response. DirectMail.com’s TouchPoints provides marketers detailed insight on customers’ buying motivations based on intelligence addressing their attitudes, receptiveness, and response behaviors. DirectMail.com’s printing technology leverages these insights, along with historical data, in strategic, personalized messaging that allows our clients to grow their market share and increase customer and donor acquisition and retention. To contact Bob, please e-mail RSalta@DirectMail.com or call 1-888-690-2252.