

# InfoTrak

Information for Better Decisions

## Make Print Communications Relevant and Personal for a Better Response

In today's crowded consumer and business-to-business markets, message relevance is emerging as the gold standard of business communication. Recognition that 'one-size-fits-all' promotions aren't very cost-effective has generated growing interest in dynamic, targeted marketing campaigns that rely on customer data to deliver relevant messages.

North Americans are exposed to upward of 7,500 media impressions every day, notes Grant Johnson, president of Johnson Direct.<sup>1</sup> "The messages that stand out in my mailbox are those that make an immediate personal impact by being entirely relevant to me and my needs."

Barbara Pellows, of Pellows & Partners, agrees.<sup>2</sup> "Marketers need to put themselves in their clients' shoes and send what's relevant — what they need and can use at that moment. Sure, it's more difficult. But it ensures significantly higher retention rates and will more efficiently drive satisfaction and sales."

Even simple personalization — the addition of a recipient's name and address to a marketing message — will raise response rates and, at present, is the most widely used customer data application in direct marketing. But advances in database and digital technologies are encouraging more companies to take personalization to a deeper level.

"Personalization is designed to present information that is more likely to be perceived as relevant," says Chris O'Leary, an independent consultant specializing in innovation and marketing.<sup>3</sup> "The whole point of personalization is to craft a message or an experience that is tuned to an individual based on some prior knowledge of their interests."

### Personalize for Profitability

According to a research study conducted by the Rochester Institute of Technology:

- Adding an individual's name to a printed page raises response rates 44 percent.
- Adding a name and using color increases response 135 percent.
- Adding a person's name, using color, and customizing content to the interests of the recipient raises response more than 500 percent.

## The Technology Behind the Technique

The ability to personalize and customize information depends heavily on a company's database and the fields of information it captures. According to Dennis Totah,<sup>4</sup> president of Catapult Target Profiling and VP of Catapult Direct Marketing, starting with a strong, validated list will, in itself, boost response rates to 5 to 15 times. More importantly, he adds, companies that have good lists have a much higher conversion ratio of inbound leads to qualified leads. This translates into greater sales efficiency, lower sales costs and increased sales capacity.

Totah says 15 to 20 percent of the average contact database becomes outdated every year. So, once you have a clean database, it's important to maintain its quality and continually augment it with new leads.

The other element necessary for personalizing and customizing content is access to variable digital printing (VDP) capabilities. The 'digital' part is what makes it possible to switch out various elements of a piece so that the printed product is personalized and/or content is customized to the intended recipient.

Achieving relevancy and personalization require data integration, timely processing and smaller production batches than traditional mass mailings. So make sure your provider can deliver robust capabilities as part of an integrated solution.

Before deciding on how much personalization and customization to do for a particular campaign, you should analyze relevant factors, such as:

- The size of your market
- The value of the sale
- The potential for cross-selling or upgrading
- Lifetime value of the customer
- And other key variables that affect profitability

**Talk to a person, not to a market. You now have more ability than ever to market one-on-one... to engage in a personal conversation with individuals.**

**— Perry Ballard**

## Uses for Variable Data Printing (VDP)

Applications for VDP span the continuum of complexity — from simply inserting the recipient's name on a letter, postcard or enrollment form to producing a truly customer-centric piece where every element is uniquely tailored to the recipient. Headlines, copy blocks, copy length, text size, colors, images and other design elements can all vary to match customer preferences, demographics, psychographics, past purchasing patterns and similar data.

For example:

- Newsletter and magazine cover stories can vary based on customer needs, location, season and other key variables. The spring issue of a pharmaceutical company's consumer newsletter could feature a cover story on their latest allergy medication for readers known to have seasonal allergies. Copy could be altered to focus on allergens most common in the reader's geographic region.
- As part of an enrollment campaign, insurers can personalize booklets and pre-populate forms with names, addresses, phone numbers, birth dates and other key data.
- Sales materials can be customized by market, region, location and sales representative or dealer. Companies can also let sales personnel and dealers create their own letterhead, business cards, advertisements, sales sheets and more, by choosing customizable elements from a pre-approved digital library and digitally printing the quantities they need, as they need them.
- Using direct mail, a bank could send a personalized letter to a customer, whose certificate of deposit is nearing renewal, enclosing literature and illustrations offering other, suitable investment options available through the bank.
- Employers can customize benefits booklets by workforce demographics such as job level, salaried versus hourly workers, division, location and more.

In addition to making personalization/customization cost-effective, digital print is also useful when you need quick turnaround or want to print smaller quantities. Used as part of an overall inventory management strategy, digitizing documents can also reduce costs associated with storage, spoilage, obsolescence and delivery.

**If there is an image the recipient identifies with, the probability that the document will be read goes up exponentially.**

**— Barbara Pellows**

## The Bottom Line

The more focused and attentive you are to the interests of your prospects, the more likely it is that your communications will be read, remembered and acted upon. Personalization — especially if used in conjunction with customized, relevant copy and images — helps you cut through the clutter of mass marketing, capture a prospect's interest and encourage that prospect to take action. The end result is a greatly improved customer experience, greater brand integrity, higher customer retention and more revenue.

As new competitors enter the market and customers become more selective, the need for personalized, relevant, immediate communication becomes more urgent. Comac can help you analyze your business needs to determine the most appropriate solution — a solution that addresses the needs of your audiences, fits your budget, and meets your critical timeframes. For more information, call us at 1-866-COMAC4U, or visit us on the web at [www.comac.com](http://www.comac.com).

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### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Just for You, October 15, 2006, [http://directmag.com/disciplines/creative/marketing\\_article\\_8/?cid=response\\_rate](http://directmag.com/disciplines/creative/marketing_article_8/?cid=response_rate)

<sup>2</sup> Driving Relevant Personalization: Taking Advantage of Direct Mail Possibilities, [www.digitaloutput.net/content/ContentCT.asp?P=723](http://www.digitaloutput.net/content/ContentCT.asp?P=723)

<sup>3</sup> Why Personalization Matters, [www.marketingprofs.com/2/personalizationmatters.asp](http://www.marketingprofs.com/2/personalizationmatters.asp)

<sup>4</sup> Clean = Green, October 15, 2006, [http://directmag.com/disciplines/lists/marketing\\_clean\\_green/](http://directmag.com/disciplines/lists/marketing_clean_green/)



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