



# Attain Success in an Integrated World

How to avoid the pitfalls of brand-integrated direct marketing

Most marketers can recite the official chief marketing officer (CMO) mantra: "Integrate all campaigns! Speak with one voice! Deliver a brand-consistent message across all channels!" This mantra is accompanied by visions of steadily growing awareness, preference for a company's brand, along with ever increasing shareholder value.

Where mantra becomes shibboleth—for B-to-B and B-to-C marketers alike—is in its application to direct marketing. That's because marketing organizations often don't appreciate the subtle tactical differences between brand-building and response generation. Earnestly supporting the vision of the CMO, they routinely send their agencies on missions to create work that is fatally flawed.

Not the result you had in mind? To avoid it, let's take a moment to examine the respective drivers of brand and direct marketing.

## Building Preference vs. Generating Response

Brand advertising has evolved from public relations, a one-to-many communication method with a one-way channel from marketer to consumer. It is primarily focused on changing the way people think about a company and its products, so as to ultimately drive preference.

In pursuit of this goal, brand marketers instruct their advertising agencies to develop "big idea" creative

that will make a positive impression on consumers. Then, they employ the most targeted and cost-effective vehicles to expose their target audience to the same message again and again, to ultimately influence thinking and recall. It takes a while, and it isn't cheap, but it works.

To illustrate this point, fill in the following blank space: \_\_\_\_\_ Soup.

If you can fill in that blank without once thinking of Campbell's, you are one exceptional individual.

What are the underlying drivers of branding? Positioning strategy, combined with unique and innovative creative execution, to attract the attention and influence the mind of the target audience.

Direct marketing, on the other hand, has evolved from sales. It is a one-to-one communication method with a two-way communication channel. It's focused on affecting not what people think, but what they actually do. Direct marketing is about prompting action—right now. The target audience's awareness of the product/service, or of its brand, really doesn't matter all that much.

What are the underlying drivers of direct marketing? They're offer, targeting, cost/contact and copy strategy rolled up into one. Direct marketing is an offer delivery medium. It's about what the recipient will receive—information, a gift, a discount—by engaging in the desired behavior. If the offer

strategy is right, low impact creative won't hurt. If the offer strategy is wrong, no amount of high concept brand-integrated creative will save the day.

In fact, brand-integrated creative is often part of the problem. Business people and consumers these days have neither the time nor the inclination to figure out high concept direct. They look at a piece of direct communication—e-mail or postal, print ad or banner—and instantly ask themselves, "What's in this for me?" They won't put forth the effort to understand your beautifully created, brand-integrated package. So in conveying the value of your offer, the clearer and easier to understand you manage to be, the better your results will be.

Results, immediate and tangible, are the name of the game in direct marketing. This is not to say that results don't matter in branding. Of course, they do. It's just that accountability of above-the-line investments is much more amorphous than it is with direct response. In branding, a company ponders things like changes to aided and unaided recall, trying to figure out whether its multimillion-dollar investment was well spent.

Direct marketing measures everything to the penny. We measure cost-per-response, cost-per-registration, cost-per-qualified lead and cost-per-sale. Our ability to do these things is a big part of direct marketing's appeal. On

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the other hand, it gives us absolutely no place to hide. Either our campaigns work and deliver the requisite numbers or we're toast.

The table below illustrates the continuum of communication vehicles and their applications to brand and response. Notice that, as the media channels become more one-to-one, the offer content needs to increase to achieve maximum effectiveness. As the offer content increases, the probable range of the cost-per-sale decreases.

### Add Brand, Subtract Performance

The direct marketer is in a decid-

edly awkward position when it comes to chanting along with the CMO's mantra. By instructing all channels to speak with one voice, odds are the CMO is instructing the direct marketer to say things that aren't going to be helpful in sparking immediate response. This doesn't mean that direct marketing can't be used to deliver a brand message. It certainly can, but that's not its primary objective.

As the table below demonstrates, the more brand messages you shoehorn into a direct communication, the less effective it is at delivering the offer and getting the response you seek because your customers are unclear as to exactly what it is you want them to do. This

is why I urge marketers not to employ their general brand advertising agencies for direct response work. General agencies, as a general rule, don't understand offer strategy. What's more, their creative teams typically view direct marketing as uncool, and they are prone to presenting high concept work that's more stimulating to them than it will be to your customers.

### Create a Peaceful Co-existence

Am I suggesting that you stroll into the CMO's office and tell him to stuff his brand? Of course not.

What you should tell him is how

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## Brand vs. Direct Marketing

Performance Degradation as Brand Content Increases and Offer Content Decreases

Copy Platform	Brand Content	Offer Content	Approximate Cost Per Sale
Primarily Offer-Driven	10%	90%	\$50 - \$100
Offer Leads—Brand Follows	25%	75%	\$200 - \$250
Brand Leads—Offer Follows	75%	25%	\$400 - \$600
Primarily Brand-Driven	90%	10%	\$800 - \$1,000

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you intend to leverage the brand to generate peak performance for your direct campaigns. Explain how you'll employ brand advertising graphics and brand messaging to make your direct communications, and the offers they promote, more credible, valuable, exclusive and desirable.

While you're there, you might also explain that since direct marketing is a medium of action, it also can support the brand by encouraging customers

to interact with the brand. A direct marketing communication can drive customers to a hot, creative, educational Web site; it can put information in their hands; it can encourage them to speak with a sales person or to view the product firsthand, at point-of-sale or in their homes and offices.

How can you, as a direct marketer, achieve success in an integrated world?

- **Defend the promotion of your offer to the end.** Your offer is NOT the

product or the company you are selling. Your offer is not who you are, how great you are or how many awards you've won; it's what THEY, the customers, get by responding to your offer. If you can't promote a great offer, don't do direct marketing.

- **Don't hide your offer.** Don't make it difficult for the reader to see it, understand its value or figure out how to get it. Don't wrap your offer in layers of brand messages that distract, confuse or overwhelm the reader.

- **Tell readers again and again that you have an offer for them.** Tell them three times ... five times ... as many as 10 times within a piece. The single most important message we deliver in a direct marketing communication is: "Hey, reader, here is a valuable, exclusive offer just for you. Come and get it right away." Everything else is secondary.

- **Remember that emotion drives behavior.** Far more people buy aspirin than buy vitamins. Why? Because they want to get relief from pain. The more effectively you can position your offer as a solution to a problem the better. The more you can use fear, guilt, greed, exclusivity or even anger to give your reader a passionate reason to respond, the better your results will be.

## A Final Word

Doing direct marketing in an integrated environment involves serving two masters. It's a fact of your occupational life. You must do everything you reasonably can to support the brand, not because the CMO says so, but because it's good for your company. However, you must never lose sight of the fundamental reason you were hired: to deliver offers and get results. That's good for your company and for you, too. ■

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