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Personalization: More Than Inserting a Name

Creating Targeted, Powerful DM Communication Through Printing

In our 21st century American economy, smaller budgets are the norm—and marketers are feeling the pinch. Do more? With fewer resources? That's the expectation in nearly every office in the country. As a result, marketers are seeking new ways to market smarter, not harder—to shift from a mass-media mindset of generating as many leads as possible, to a paradigm focused more on the quality of leads generated.

Throughout the printing industry, buzzwords like “personalization,” “one-to-one marketing” and “variable data” are the phrases being thrown at clients as the next great thing in printing. These terms generally refer to the improving capabilities of printers to vary text and graphics on each piece printed. But what marketers need to remember is that personalization is not so much a printing advancement as it is a communication revolution.

Defining Personalization

Thanks to a lack of clarity and definition of personalization, many marketers today simply envision a glorified mail merge—smoothly inserting a prospect's name or address into a direct mail piece, as if to say “we know who you are.”

But the purpose of marketing in a customer-centric business is to reach the right prospect with the right message at the right time to influence the buying decision. And with that understanding, we can define what personalization can really be: true personalization leverages a marketer's gathered data to tailor his entire marketing approach, messages and tone to better target the prospect's needs, or her position in the buying process.

Anyone with a mailbox knows how saturated the direct mail world has become. As consumers ourselves, we all realize how numb we've become to unwanted mail. Personalization seeks to break through the marketing clutter with quality and relevance of content—not quantity or frequency of content. With personalization, measures of success are no longer cost-per-impession, but are instead ROI and lifetime customer value.

Leveraging Personalization

Traditional printing models are built on economy of scale: the more you print, the more cost-efficient your investment is. But with today's availability of ever-improving digital printing technology, it's time for marketers to harness personalization to increase the efficiency of marketing messages. There are three main avenues to do so:

Targeted messaging uses marketing data and customer intelligence to identify prospects that are at a position in the buying cycle where they can be influenced to act, and then delivers a relevant, customized message that resonates with them. Instead of every prospect receiving the same piece, each recipient gets a piece with the most appropriate message, offer and tone.

Personal connections establish and build a relationship between a prospect and a specific—and often local—company representative. By introducing the representative to the



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customer and “humanizing” the rep with personal information or photos, the company has set the stage for a smooth follow-up contact.

Personalized fulfillment seeks to enhance the perceived relevance and value of an offer to increase response. Fulfillment can be managed on-demand, can be customized based on the information provided by the respondent, and can appear to come from a specific person at the company.

It's clear that the potential of personalization reaches far beyond the ability to slap a prospect's name into a direct mail piece. Today's savvy marketers will leverage the advancements in print technology to better communicate and connect with customers on an individual basis—by customizing entire messages, not just the opening line in a letter.