

Marketers: You're buying responses, not print!

PrintSoft reminds marketers to focus on increasing relevant responses, not just on production and postage costs

"Junk" mail serves nobody — it gives the sender a bad reputation, and wastes money.

Each Direct Mailing costs about \$1, so a typical response rate of 1% costs \$100 per response. Clearly concentrating on increasing responses is more important than trimming production costs. Of the three factors that govern response, the offer, database accuracy and relevance, technology makes a major contribution to accuracy and relevance.

Cap Ventures reports that eliminating mis-addressing and combining simple personalisation with full colour can significantly enhance response rates by up to 135%; add full logic from a marketing database and you're looking at an impressive 500% increase.

Typically a mailing has just 2.5 seconds to engage its recipient, so how can marketers carve through the clutter and save money? Documents should be composed to match the recipient's profile and contain inserts specifically selected for each recipient. Better; digital full colour should replace inserts with unique recipient-profiled offerings.

According to "Meeting the Demand for Colour" (Cygnus Graphics Network), colour improves document perception, increases attention span and identifies brands more effectively. It also provides the means for true one-to-one personalised documents, not just covering letters.

So why do so many poorly targeted, lack-lustre mailshots drop through our letterboxes?

One factor is the lack of crossover between Marketing and IT Departments. Marketing is tasked with developing creative, award-winning campaigns: it deals in Design, Layout and Copy Writing. It also maintains the customer database, but may not have the skills to leverage vast quantities of accumulated data. The IT department however eats data for breakfast, understands scripting and variable information, but may neglect visual appeal.

This lack of cohesion between Design and Production lies behind so many poorly executed mailings and subsequent missed opportunities. How often has a great design been sacrificed at the altar of, *'The personalisation software doesn't do that!'*

Add to this the problems associated with marketing literature inserts... out-of-date before the mailing is even dispatched, late arriving or damaged.

Cost-effective, full colour, personalised documents are achievable with the right tools. You'll need a flexible document composition tool to share throughout the organisation by staff with different skill-sets and needs. It should have an easy point-and-click interface with which marketing staff can design; requiring no programming skills. But under the cover it needs the full scripting capabilities for IT staff to deal with applications rich in complex logic.

But isn't colour personalisation expensive? No — it's refreshingly cost-effective! Remember that you're buying responses, not documents. Consider too how MailSort benefits might be lost with batching, the wastage costs of inserts, and problems of assembling pages from different sources. Compare this to a fully integrated, one-to-one application, optimised throughout the work cycle. Even the small incremental cost of digital full colour becomes insignificant.

What about the all-important response rate? MD-Lab recently conducted a rigorous experiment for France Telecom to compare a traditional customer mailing with a full colour personalised alternative. The results: over 5 times more responses for the personalised version; cost of acquisition per response just a quarter of that for the traditional mailshot.

Now that's the cost-effective way to buy responses!