



1225 Ken Pratt Boulevard • Suite 121 • Longmont, CO 80501
www.directhitmarketing.com • (303) 666-0798

3 REASONS WHY DIRECT MAIL RESULTS ARE INCREASING

By

John M. Coe, VP Business Development

Back to the Future

There was a time, not so long ago, that direct mail was the workhorse for trade show marketing and many other B2B industries. Then along came the newer and less expensive communication media of email, search, and social plus other digital ad technologies. In this new mix direct mail was not forgotten, but **relegated to “the last resort”**. Results of the new media were initially strong, and as a result usage of direct mail declined.

Then something odd began to happen a few years ago – **direct mail response rates began to climb** (see the DMA Statistics Fact Book). There are good reasons for that, as there was less mail plus the mailings became more relevant in terms of targeting, messages and offers due to the use of improved databases and segmentation.

Just like in the movie, **smart marketers are now not only returning to the usage of direct mail**, but now developing new and impactful usages. Much of this has been documented, and what follows may be a rehash for many marketers, but hopefully a few ideas or reinforcements will be offered on **the value and usage of direct mail for trade show marketing**.

1. Advantages of Direct Mail

There are significant advantages of direct mail that we seem to forget. Here are the major ones.

- **It's tactile** and even the act of briefly looking at the mailing piece and tossing it away requires more human engagement than clicking the delete button. Of course, its tactile nature also encourages closer inspection whether turning it over and/or opening it. Email, social and banner ads are not tactile and are not as engaging.
- **There are a wide variety of formats.** From the standard post card to 3-D or impact mailings the creative options are almost unlimited. Some years ago I even heard of a firm that sent a 12” two x four piece of wood with a letter attached through the mail – I have no idea how much that postage was, but I also heard it was very successful. If a high value repeat attendee segmentation can be identified, then consider an impact mailing – something that goes “bump” in the mail. Yes, they are more expensive, but also very effective.



1225 Ken Pratt Boulevard • Suite 121 • Longmont, CO 80501
www.directhitmarketing.com • (303) 666-0798

- **Digital printing allows for not only impactful graphics but personalization as well.** We all know the higher degree of relevancy of the message and offer, the higher engagement and response rates. For past attendees a different message and offer should be crafted vs. prospects. People want to be remembered and valued, and the personalization available in direct mail can accomplish that. This is particularly true for multi-year attendees.
- **For many shows, there is much to communicate** – dates, location, featured activities, educational seminars, etc. All of this can be contained in one mailing piece, and frequently is saved by the individual for reference and registration. Certainly this is easier for them than printing out the email!
- One great tip from Keith Goodman, VP Sales & Marketing at Modern Post Cards is to **print a QR Code on the mailing piece** as many individuals still will scan them. It should tie directly to the registration page of the show, and if possible be already filled out with the name and information of the individual.

2. Multi-media and Multi-touch campaigns.

Sophisticated trade show marketers all know that only one touch and/or one media is not the best way to drive registration. In Don Schultz's book on Integrated Marketing, he concludes – "All the touches will accumulate to a behavior." Most campaigns now are multi-touch/multi media. All media is used as is appropriate for the target audiences. Yet, when we want to communicate to an individual the three media are email, mail and, at times, phone.

The sequence and frequency of this strategy varies, but mail is a very important component. In fact, Greg Nappi, Director, Audience Database Marketing at Emerald Expositions reports that direct mail when properly timed, is the key media in a multi-touch/multi-media campaign. He also reports that the mail lifts open rates on emails – and we all want to find that secret sauce!

3. Pass-Along and Redirection

An often overlooked value of a mailing piece is its pass along value. Many firms will send multiple individuals to a major industry trade show, and it is unlikely all will get the mailing as they are not on your database. Yet the individual in the company receiving the mailing probably knows who is likely to attend this year, and will pass it along – a two for one result.



1225 Ken Pratt Boulevard • Suite 121 • Longmont, CO 80501
www.directhitmarketing.com • (303) 666-0798

In addition, in large companies the mail room will still deliver mailings to “replacement” individuals, at least for a time. As job changes and new hires are more frequent than you think this redirection can be important to communicate and register new or promoted employees.

How to Increase Direct Mail Results at Lower Cost.

While direct mail is making a comeback, there is no denying that it’s relatively expensive and will probably get more costly as printing and postage increase. So how do you send mail to those individuals who you really want to communicate with and at the same time reduce the cost? The answer is obvious – **don’t send mail to individuals who are not there, won’t register or are not interested.**

Here are **five ways to save money on direct mail.**

- Before any mailing, **run the list through NOCA** to catch those companies who have moved. Also have the mail shop apply **CASS certification** to insure the address meets postal standards. This is standard practice to insure the proper delivery of the mail, but at times we forget or even think it’s not needed – it is!
- **Maintain a central suppress file** that contains names of individuals/companies who should not be mailed.
 - Exhibitors and individuals from exhibitors who may have also registered as these firms are the responsibility of your sales team.
 - Current registrations, as it makes no sense to send an already registered attendee another invitation to attend. Saves both money and brand image. Emails to those pre-registration files are fine, but don’t spend money on mailings.
 - A do-not-mail file should be kept, as over time individuals and/or companies ask to be removed from mailings. This obviously is a small file but important.
- **Reduce the number of mailings going into a company location** as over the years, the number of individuals from one company may have grown to the point of oversaturation. First, compare prior year registrations to the number of mailings going into that location and when it’s out of balance, cut back to those key titles that make sense or are the last ones to register. We have found that cutting back with this analysis does not affect registration from these companies.



1225 Ken Pratt Boulevard • Suite 121 • Longmont, CO 80501
www.directhitmarketing.com • (303) 666-0798

- **Identify “non-responsive” locations** and cut back the mailings. First tag each location with a code and then take a 3-5 look back at how many registrations have come from each location. Mail only what makes sense into these locations based on their actual attendance. This can be a significant savings while not impacting registration.
- **Identify best vs. worst performing segments.** There are many ways to segment a database depending on what data is captured. Frequently, shows have house files (by year of registration), trade publication lists, and prospect list from their party data sources. Select these and/or other logical segments based on the data, and compare registration between them. Almost always, differences will be uncovered, and this will provide the insight needed to establish the mailing quantity devoted to the best vs. worst segment.

To Sum Up

Direct mail is back in the marketing mix and is better than before! Now I may be prejudiced as I have my marketing roots in direct mail, but all the recent results support this comeback story. Don't forget the basics when creating a direct mail campaign and that includes good copywriting – a hard skill to find. As we always say – test, test and test, but with the right data, message, offer and creative direct mail will work for you.

John M. Coe

John has partnered with Direct Hit Marketing and is responsible for business development and thought leadership. John is also President of B2BMarketing, LLC. His background includes experience in both sales and marketing. On the sales side, John was a field salesman, national sales manager and executive in charge of both sales and marketing for three major B2B firms. On the marketing side, he was president of a B2B direct marketing agency for 10 years, National Campaign Manager at IBM, Sr. VP of B2B at Rapp Collins Worldwide and President of Protocol B2B. John is also the author of *The Fundamentals of Business-to-Business Sales & Marketing*, published by McGraw-Hill. John's next book co-authored with Steve Juedes, President of DHM is titled *Data-Driven Trade Show Marketing & Sales for Organizers and Exhibitors* is due for publication in early 2019. He can be reached at johnc@directhitmarketing.com or by phone at 602-402-6588.