

MORE SPAM ANYONE?

DIRECT MARKETING THAT'S THROWN TOGETHER AND THROWN OUT TO CONSUMERS OFTEN ENDS UP THROWN IN THE TRASH. KEITH PRICE LOOKS AT HOW DM CAN BE A TASTY MAIN MARKETING DISH INSTEAD OF PROCESSED RUBBISH.

"THE GROWTH OF NEW MEDIA HAD RESULTED IN SPAM AS THE NEW JUNK MAIL. MANY PEOPLE ASSOCIATE ONLINE MARKETING WITH UNSOLICITED, PREMIUM RATE TEXTS, WHICH HAS DAMAGED THE REPUTATION OF ONLINE MARKETING TOOLS TO A CERTAIN EXTENT."

The essence of direct marketing happens to be a lot like writing a feature: it's vital you have your target audience well defined, in order to communicate your message to the correct people. In the case of this report on DM, we're hoping to communicate with an eclectic band of shrewd marketers – the sort of reader we've come to expect here at *Adline*, whose enthusiasm will be aroused at the very idea of learning about the vast opportunities DM can furnish for their company.

If you're thinking junk mail, then think again – there's far more to DM than just the endless supply of free pens and loan applications that are crammed into my letterbox on a regular basis (a special thank you to Capital One).

And, as the holiday season arrives at a hurtling pace, TDA director Neil Fox explains the true meaning of direct marketing. "Christian Brann (the founder of what is now EHS Brann) once defined the difference between direct marketing and advertising as the difference between moving a small number of people a long way versus a large number of people a small way. I think this still holds true in principle – DM is defined by its requirement to elicit a response from individual customers – whether that response is a direct purchase of product or a step in the journey that persuades the customer to buy the product."

Julia Phipps, the current managing director of the

forementioned EHS Brann, adds: "Traditionally, direct marketing could be defined as building individual relationships with prospects or customers using communications that are measurable and accountable. In essence, this still applies today, although direct marketing both on- and offline is also now seen as a brand building tool, using the values and emotions associated with individual brands to gain extra leverage with customers."

So now that we're well versed in the rudimentary essence of DM, it's time to turn our focus to the changing face of the industry and the possibilities and opportunities out there for companies wanting to market direct. Through the emergence of the online medium, DM has been presented with a new channel to be exploited. Explaining why the DM industry has been impacted by the facilities of the online medium, Phipps commented: "Because the web is such a one-to-one medium, it lends itself perfectly to the more personal communication style and techniques synonymous with direct marketing. E-marketing is cost effective, instantly measurable and highly adaptable, as well as being easy to personalise.

"That said, it is just another marketing channel and should be treated as such. Effective direct marketing is based on the development of media-neutral campaigns. Online activity should only be considered when it will help meet clients' specific

business objectives," she added.

And how have DM agencies reacted to the medium? Yvonne Hutchinson, client services director at Navigator Responsive Advertising, commented: "Instead of everyone running around scared of it, leading agencies in DM have realised that it is just another channel – OK, it has particular quirks to it but, used correctly, just like direct mail, it can be massively successful."

And so, rather than steering the DM industry in a different direction, online media has simply given companies another route where clients can be met. Returning to subject junk mail, the plague of the industry, TDA's creative director, online, Laurence Grinter, divulges how online, despite its box of tricks, has not helped to diminish the stereotypes of DM. "It's made it much more responsive with immediate results and tracking, allowing us to test and fine-tune creatives. It provides valuable extra response channels in the form of web, e-mail, SMS and iTV. Controversially though, it may well have also tainted the perception of direct marketing through the infamous spamming with e-mails and SMS."

Dr Adam Beaumont, managing director of (aq) limited, specialists in SMS text messaging marketing campaigns, corroborates Grinter's point. He commented: "The growth of new media has resulted in spam as the new 'junk mail' and, unfortunately, many people associate online marketing with

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Above: L to r: TDA's Laurence Grinter and Neil Fox. Adam Beaumont of (aq) limited. Julia Phipps from EHS Brann. Far left: dream work from Tequila for Brother. Left: One of EHS Brann's aspirational executions.



thing. Also on the positive side is the tight control on timings. Companies can react phenomenally quickly to events such as interest rate rises, news events, weather, sports results and so on, and tailor the message to make it absolutely current," commented Bell

He continued: "On the negative side, some of the disciplines of direct marketing that had been tested and proven over many years are being completely ignored by some companies. The basic rules still apply, and should be paid due respect. The fact the communication manifests itself in digital form rather than print does not excuse the lack of application of knowledge."

And so the potential of both media channels in DM, just like any form of marketing, relies heavily on an agency's ability to identify and meet its clients' business objectives. As Beaumont explains: "The effectiveness of all direct marketing is dependent on identifying and targeting your market effectively and on using the form of communication that best suits your purpose and audience."

Many leading brands have benefited from using DM, especially in direct sales, which is often one of the objectives that gets buried under the celebration of creativity. And so, if done right and you have the right team to create and implement the campaign, DM should be able to whet the appetite of any shrewd *Adline* reading marketeer.

unsolicited, premium rate texts, which has damaged the reputation of online marketing tools to a certain extent."

Undeterred by any negative stereotypes that continue to irritate DM professionals, the industry is confident DM has a lot to offer. As Phipps explains: "There are no hard and fast rules. Campaigns must be looked at on an individual basis. For some clients, online will work most effectively, for some, offline and for others a combination of the two." She added: "The successful DM agencies are those which can offer clients creative, technical and planning expertise across every media channel available."

So just how effective are offline and online media as channels in DM? Is one of the media stronger than the other? Matt Bell, managing director of Tequila Manchester, shoots *Adline* down. He commented: "There are too many variables in both channels to generalise about effectiveness – quality of data, product, sector, creative, and so on. However, suffice to say, there is felt to be a role for both, overall. The skill is deploying the right one, or blend of both, to achieve your objectives."

Not one to be backward in coming forward, Bell believes online media is a double-edged sword. "The emergence of online has had both a positive and negative effect on the industry. On the positive side, online has injected new passion into a discipline that had in some cases got a little dusty. The fact that the medium opens up creative challenges can only be a good



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