

PressLines

Volume 21, Number 3 | Summer 2011

Marketers Acquire a Taste for Postcards

As the cost to mail catalogs increases, many marketers seek alternative strategies. Many embrace digital, but as the past two *MCM Outlook* reports indicate, other direct mail formats are popular as well — especially postcards. Part of the reason is that postcards are highly economical vehicles. You can mail a postcard for far less (\$.29 at basic rate for a 6" long x 4 1/4" high x .16" thick card) than a First Class letter (\$.44) or the typical cost of a catalog.



Postcards Are Irresistible

What's more, postcards can be performance powerhouses when done right. They sometimes do remarkably well even when done poorly. One of the reasons they work is that postcards come "pre-opened." There's no decision to make. The offer is right in front of you. Postcards draw immediate attention and give you more than a fighting chance to entice prospects even when the sender is unknown. In short, they're great for today's over-messaged marketplace.

Learn the Basic Postcard Recipe

There are four postcard basics you need to get right:

1. **Attention-demanding Headline.** You only get a few seconds to gain attention, so headlines must be big and benefit-oriented.
2. **Involving Visual.** Draw in the recipient by making the visual and headline work as a team. Visuals should be as large and involving as possible. Showing a product or service in action is always an effective recommendation.

3. **Persuasive Copy.** Maintain interest with strong, feature- and benefit-oriented copy. Since the postcard is likely the first in a multi-step approach, copy should entice and qualify.
4. **Call to Action.** Be sure you tell recipients exactly what action to take and assume nothing. You should direct the person to "Call toll free today for a free catalog," or whatever is the appropriate action. Multiple, user-friendly options tend to work best.

Add a Little Technology Spice

Separate your postcards from the competition by taking advantage of today's print technology:

- **Blend in Some Data.** From variable data digital printing to

Ripon's Postcard Services

- Multiple print options
- Mobile barcodes
- Personalized URLs (pURLs)
- Variable data imaging
- Repositionable notes
- Scratch-offs
- Die cuts
- Scented varnishes

inkjet imaging, print technology provides opportunities to personalize and customize postcard mailings. Start simply with something like an inkjet imaged store map, if necessary, and then work your way up. But do try to get past the "name thing" ASAP. It's not that using someone's name isn't worthwhile — it is — but today's variable technologies allow you to do so much more with photos, graphics and copy.

■ Garnish with Involvement.

Postcards can now be more involving than ever. Consider mobile barcodes, which enable smartphone users equipped with the correct reader software to scan the code and be directed to a programmed URL.

You can also create postcards with personalized URLs (pURLs) that connect recipients to a personal landing page where they typically receive an incentive for their effort. These work best when you provide offers at the personal landing page that go beyond the original promise, such as free shipping or club membership. Besides the personalization effect, the big benefit of pURLs is that they provide a reliable method for tracking postcard recipients who went online as a result of the

promotion, whether or not they took advantage of the offer.

Finally, don't dismiss involvement devices such as scratch-offs, repositionable notes and other proven techniques that can boost effectiveness.

Create Tantalizing Postcards at Ripon Printers

Ripon Printers can help you create postcards that will have your customers salivating over your offers. We provide a wide range of personalization options as well as tasty touches from mobile barcodes to scented varnish. For more information, contact your Ripon Printers representative or send an email inquiry to sales@riponprinters.com. **RIPON**

See Us at the 2011 Print & Media Conference

Participants at the 6th Annual Print & Media Conference, sponsored by Print Buyers International (PBI), should be sure to visit Ripon Printers at Booth #3. This year's event will be co-located at Graph

Expo, the mega print show held annually at Chicago's McCormick Place. The PBI Print & Media Conference will take place on Tuesday–Wednesday, September 13th–14th. The conference program features the best, most interesting and relevant topics — delivered by industry experts — for print and media buyers today.

Various ticket options are available. To learn more, contact conference sponsor Margie Dana at 617-730-5951, send an email inquiry to info@printbuyersinternational.com or visit <http://tinyurl.com/6c27jw3>. **RIPON**



Choices (or, Have it Your Way!)

Have you ever experienced information overload when trying to make a decision, where there are so many choices that the *best choice* sometimes seems to be making no choice at all?

Recently I was planning a trip to Cancun. My wife, Jeanne, and I had the objective of finding a place with guaranteed sun and warmth that didn't take too long to travel to from Wisconsin. Since we had been to Cancun several years ago on our honeymoon, we thought it would be a good choice for our vacation.

I admit I love to use Priceline for making hotel reservations, primarily because it represents solid hotels at a very reasonable cost. The other great thing about Priceline is that it *chooses* the hotel for you. But I decided not to use Priceline for this trip as I foolishly wanted to make the choice myself.

So far, so good. However, have you tried to book a hotel in a resort area? There are



Andy Lyke

dozens and dozens of hotels! Some are "all inclusive" with meals and activities included in the price, and some hotels are not. Some of the hotels are in Cancun, some are nearby and some are many miles down the coast. Each hotel also had several further options. We could get the garden view room, the ocean view room, the deluxe ocean view room or the presidential suite. Once you select the room, there are further "packages" that you can choose from, including the "breakfast included" package or the "half-priced spa" package or the one that offered free transportation to and from the

hotel. The number of options is practically limitless! I had to walk away from the computer several times when my brain started to hurt with the choices.

In the end, Jeanne and I invited her parents to join our family for the vacation (we have two boys), and Jeanne's father helped us with the final choice — a hotel on Cancun's hotel strip with an ocean view, free internet and free breakfast — and it was perfect. (My only gripe was that my in-laws had the hotel room next to ours and it had an adjoining door that seemed to be open whenever I was in the shower!)

Now, as you consider your next printing projects, I know you have to make hundreds of choices during the course of that work. And if we can help you with some of those tougher choices, please let us know. **RIPON**



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Spring Print Competition Awards announced

Basketball has the Sweet 16, we have the Terrific 12!



We lived our own March Madness dream this Spring, having earned six first place awards in the 2011 Web Offset Association (WOA) Print Competition and another six firsts in the Printing Industries of Wisconsin 2011 Graphic Excellence Awards (GEA).

With the WOA contest in its 29th year, well over 500 entries from 58 North American printing companies and educational institutions were judged. WOA is an affiliated association of the Printing Industries of America.

The GEA contest celebrated its 11th year, judging nearly 800 pieces

from 51 Wisconsin printers, binderies, schools and graphic arts firms. The top prize is "The Badger" after the tenacious Wisconsin state animal.

Between both competitions, we earned awards for heatset and coldset web printing, sheetfed printing and an on-demand digital press three-piece promotional campaign with variable data. We are truly lucky to have customers who create dramatic looking pieces and then allow us to work our printing — and binding — magic!

A complete list of the winning pieces can be found on our website at www.riponprinters.com/corporate/awards.jsp. **RIPON**