

The synergy between printed material and online content can add life and energy to your marketing

Beyond the sales letter

Cultivating customer relationships with direct response marketing

The conventional direct marketing process is familiar, almost tediously so, to many business professionals:

- Sales prospect gets direct mail promotion in mailbox.
- Sales materials persuade sales prospect to purchase product.
- Sales prospect is now considered “direct-mail responsive.”

You can repeat this technique as many times as desired, limited only by the prospect’s memory and the size of their mailbox (considering how many of your competitors are doing this as well).

If successful, the result will be a higher measured sales volume and a more refined, efficient mailing list.

The modern marketing definition of a customer

Think of the word “custom,” meaning something that is familiar. Your real customers will welcome your communications, not throw them in a pile of competing offers (or worse, the rubbish).

Those you will want to call customers aren’t just regularly-used sales leads. Ideally, they are active participants in a dynamic *relationship* that should last for the life of your business.

A more modern, revised direct marketing process

If you’re not selling concert tickets or credit card offers, the procedure should be more like the following:

- Prospect views promotional offer in direct marketing medium (either by mail or on marketing web site).
- Prospect responds to invitation and claims a freely offered piece of promotional material, thereby becoming a “customer.”
- Customer views highly-targeted sales message every time this free benefit is accessed.
- Customer receives benefits as they become available, along with sales messages at regular intervals that are directly related to this material.

“But what about selling?”

You may have noticed that the word *purchase* isn’t mentioned above.

Don’t worry. If you regularly repeat the last two steps, including quality information and offers each time, regular sales to your accumulated customers will be inevitable.

The beginning of a customer relationship is their first expression of interest, not the first sale

The never-ending story of a marketing relationship

Your advantage in following the more modern method is in recognizing a customer from the moment that their interest is expressed rather than the moment at which a sale is made.

This overture is the *beginning* of the customer relationship. The *middle* of the story is the ongoing process of:

- establishing contact regularly in a way that is useful to your customer, such as a newsletter (see [Issue 01](#))
- offering your product or service along with each of these contacts.

The *end* of the process (when the sales offer is accepted) is where your true advantage will be, since it will happen many times instead of only once as with the “conventional” method.

The importance of automation technology

Keep in mind that every computer that has ever served a web page is capable of other automated tasks, such as:

- sending timed email messages as automatic responses to an initial customer email request
- supporting interactive web pages with customer logins for customized content and sales messages

If your web site can't do these and similarly essential marketing tasks, perhaps it's time to shop around.

Examples of dynamic direct mail campaigns

Both of these demonstrate the synergy between printed material and online content that can add life and energy to your marketing campaign:

Postcards & email autoresponder

Rent a good postal mailing list and send out cards with an engaging image on the front (such as a cartoon or a unique page from your web site) and an email address on the reverse.

Sending email to this address will get them a list of free articles related to your business delivered at regular intervals or (even better) a complimentary subscription to your newsletter.

“Smart” sales letter with login and password

In your otherwise conventional sales letter, include a personalized *login* and *password* in a conspicuous place.

When a customer enters these on your web site, they will be able to download your free offerings (being prompted for their email address in the process) and then be directed straightaway to the ordering page for your product or service.

Taking the next step

Contact CoTangent today to begin growing your customer relationships with a progressive direct response campaign as part of your overall marketing strategy.

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