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3 keys to effective digital postcards

Growing businesses—which keenly need promotional punch but often cannot afford envelope-carried mailings—frequently turn to postcards as an economical substitute.

Postcards always have been less costly than envelope packages to print and mail. And today, thanks to the unsurpassed flexibility of digital, highly personalized printing, they can produce returns on investment undreamed of only a few years ago.

“With smaller mailings,” notes Wilson Zehr of Portland, Oregon’s Zairmail, now advertisers can achieve “results that can match, in revenue, those of an expensive print or broadcast campaign.”

■ Key 1: Timeliness

Zehr reports that his customers most successfully use digitally produced postcards for time-related promotions involving events such as sale announcements...scheduled classes and seminars...invitations to visit trade-show exhibits...store openings, and similar dated occasions.

One of Zehr’s customers uses full-color digital postcards, mailed two weeks before the meeting date, to 5,000 potential attendees for a one-day stock-market class.

His mailings pull 40% more response than traditional postcards and yield customers worth more than \$60,000 in lifetime value—at a cost of less than \$2,700.

■ Key 2: Targeting

“With on-demand postcards,” Zehr says, “you can segment your customers into groups

“There is more stupidity than hydrogen in the universe, and it has a longer shelf life.”

—Frank Zappa

and send groups a different postcard designed specifically for them.”

One digital card could go to individuals who buy your product or service often, or spend large amounts of money with you. A second postcard might go to customers who buy less frequently from or profitably for you. A third could jog inactive customers. A fourth could aim to mend fences with unhappy clients.

Also, on-demand postcards can make follow-up fast and easy, Zehr says. “You can send a second mailing the same day you analyze the results from your first mailing.”

■ Key 3: Creative

“With postcards,” Zehr advises, “the shorter the copy the better.”

Headlines, he says, work best in bold, black type on a white background. Avoid colored type, which can blend into background tints and cripple the attention your headline should command. Making the beginning of each headline word a capital letter is another stopper. So is putting your headline in all caps.

Use a full-color photograph to make your postcard stand out, Zehr urges. And take advantage of different postcard sizes: cards measuring 4-1/4" X 6" do fine with short messages. But, he says, 6" X 9" cards can carry more information and attract higher attention—and still can be mailed at a reasonable cost.

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