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"Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish."

—John Quincy Adams

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Vertis 2003 study confirms rise in mail response

Marketing observers long have noted that direct-mail advertising is counter-cyclical. When the rest of the economy tanks or drifts in the doldrums, they say, response advertising traditionally tends to soar.

That is still true in today's long-standing U.S. economic slump, according to the Vertis organization of Baltimore. Vertis has just released its annual study of the 2003 response rates generated by all kinds of direct-response advertising.

This year's Vertis study indicates that responses to direct-mail advertising—especially in the non-profit and insurance sectors—have grown by a robust 12% since 2001, while readership held steady.

- The Vertis 2003 study shows that 46% of U.S. consumers replied to direct-response advertising in the 30 days leading up to the survey. For 2001, the figure was 34%.
 - Among households earning more than \$75,000 a year, however, response to mail advertising grew from 53% in 2002 to 59% in 2003.
- The Vertis research indicated that Baby Boomers (now 35 to 44 years old) seem especially responsive. In 2001, 36% of them answered mail advertising in the most recent 30-day period. In 2003, that rose to 49%.

- Weekly mail readership remained at 55% of consumers between 2001 and 2003.
- Overall, 74% of all adults surveyed reported that they perused direct-mail advertising.
 - Two groups reported the highest mail readership:
 - Mail advertising readership by seniors rose from 65% to 75%.
 - Among 35- to 44-year-old survey respondents, readership grew from 73% to 78%.

While newspaper, magazine, and TV "image" advertising are all scrambling to survive in hard times, response advertising in all media continues strong, the Vertis study indicates. Almost undoubtedly because businesses increasingly are placing their bets on media that allow them to track results (and return on advertising investment) positively.

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