

W12

*Americans are subjected to 4,000 ad messages a day.
Why should they pay attention to yours?*

— Steve Cone

**Wednesday
Morning**

Fax

from

**The
Castle
Press**

6 ways to cut through holiday message clutter

Mail volume surges dramatically every year during the post-Thanksgiving holiday season. On the Monday before Christmas alone, the post office processes more than 280 million cards and letters — twice the average.

Most businesses send customers and prospects holiday cards or letters. However, writes marketing consultant Doug Stern, most of those messages “are buried or otherwise forgotten in the end-of-the-year avalanche.”

Better:

■ **Don't try to talk to everyone.**

Filter your mailing list so you won't mail Chanukah greetings to Cardinal Roger Mahony. Or to recently promoted people, using their old titles. Or to marginal prospects. Tell your sales staff to winnow out the cats and dogs.

■ **Explore alternatives to run-of-the-mill cards.**

If your store-bought card isn't trashed, what good does it do for you if it simply is taped on a customer's bulletin board, along with all your competitors' cards? Instead, send a personal letter.

■ **Integrate your holiday message into your yearly mailing program.**

It takes five, seven, or more advertising messages to make a lasting impression on a customer or prospect. A holiday greeting alone will not carry the ball. Frequent mailings add up to high impact.

■ **Know thy recipient.** Insist that your

sales people feed your database with more than the usual name, company, title, address, and phone number data.

Is your customer married? Since when? His spouse's name? His kids' names and birthdays? The date of his last title change? His favorite charity? His favorite sports? His anniversary with his company? His activities with you during the year? Refer to such data, when the shoe fits, in your message.

■ **Say something remarkable.**

To be remembered, you should stand out from the crowd. For example, you could hang your message on a news peg. Your note this year might say:

“Dear Harry, I'm sure that we both feel concern about the severe wounds that thousands of our GIs have suffered in Iraq and Afghanistan. To help them enjoy Happy Holidays in 2007 and the future, and in thanks for our continuing friendship, I have just sent a contribution in your name to Disabled American Veterans.”

■ **Do not rely on e-mail.** It is fast. It is cheap. It leaves only a fleeting impression. And it is utterly cold and impersonal.

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