Get personal

Strategies for making communications more relevant and effective

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Consumers are bombarded with marketing messages every day. Over the course of a year, the average person is exposed to over a million marketing messages from social media, television, radio, the Internet, newspapers, magazines and direct mail.[1] Indeed, the competition for consumer attention is intense. In our media-saturated world, only a select few communications successfully rise above the din of competing messages and actually garner consumer attention.

The power of personalization

How can you effectively compete in this pitched battle for customer attention? First you should 'get personal.' Studies show that personalized communications have the best chance to be noticed. Historically, response rates for generic direct mail have been disappointingly low – just over 1%. Generic e-mail marketing isn't much better with a 1.73% average conversion rate.[2] But when personalized, targeted and relevant content is added, response rates shoot up, buy as much as 500%.[3]

The more personally relevant your communications are – no matter what form they take – the more likely it is that they'll capture and hold the attention of consumers.

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Leveraging print

While social media and mobile technology are making headline news, printed communications have enjoyed a quiet comeback. Plain old print has resurfaced as an effective way to stand out from the crowd, especially when the content is personalized, targeted and relevant to customers.

According to the Direct Mail Association Factbook for 2013, 65% of consumers have made a purchase as a result of direct mail. That's a big number, considering the cultural and business trend toward going paperless. Indeed, response rates for direct mail have actually been on the rise in recent years, climbing to 4.4% in 2012 — considerably higher than the usual one-percent – surging past electronic mail's response rate of just 1.2%.[4]

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DIRECT MAIL 4.4%

E-MAIL 1.2%
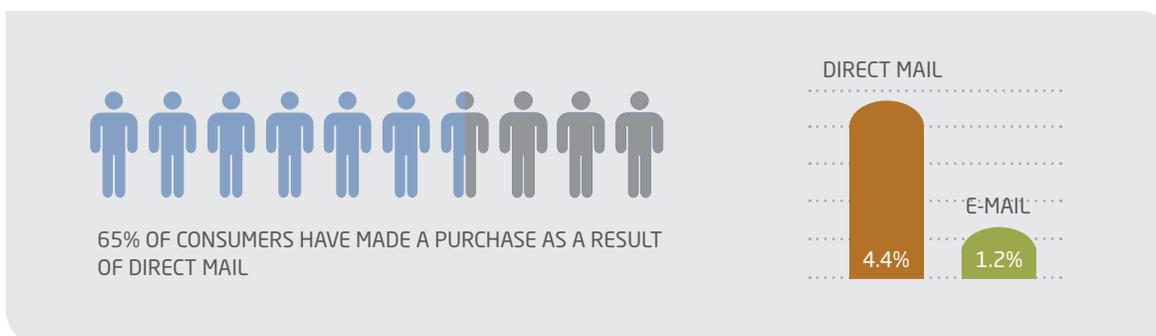
Print is often overlooked as a vital sales and communications channel. And contrary to the popular notion that 'print is dead,' researchers say that the majority of customer communications will remain in printed form for some time to come. A new study conducted by InfoTrends predicts that by 2017, approximately 65% of customer communications will exist in printed form.[5]

Online marketing is all about personalized and targeted content, and progressive companies are benefiting by applying the same paradigm to print; especially when it comes to monthly bills and statements. While we tune out much of the

marketing and junk mail we're exposed to, monthly bills and statements rarely go unread. A study by the Postal Service shows that 98 percent of consumers pick up their mail each day and spend 30 minutes reading their mail on any given occasion.[6]

Since bills and statements require an action – assessing an account or paying the amount due, for example – transactional documents get noticed. At a time when consumers are actively filtering online marketing messages through 'do not contact' lists, pop-up blockers and spam filters, bills and statements gain attention by virtue of an established relationship.

Consumers anticipate their monthly statements and bills. They trust the source and attend to the content. As a result, traditional printed transactional documents provide a unique and often overlooked opportunity for organizations to communicate and connect with customers in new and lucrative ways.

Managing multi-channel communications

While print will remain an important customer touch point, social media and mobile technology are now a powerful part of the customer communications mix. Facebook has over 665 million users, Twitter grew by 33% last year, and the number of people accessing the Internet via a mobile phone has risen to well over 8 million.[7]

Consumers want more choices and greater flexibility in terms of how they receive information and maintain accounts; a mix of electronic delivery alongside printed documents and mail. Customers expect a consistent experience, no matter how they're interacting with a company, be it on paper, online or in person.

Personalized campaigns that coordinate messages across multiple customer touch points (e.g., bills and statements) and delivery channels, such as social media and other online channels, can help organizations understand how to direct their efforts and marketing budgets in order to maximize their return on investment. The more personalized, relevant and dynamic communications are, the more likely it is that companies will realize long-term business results from their customer communications efforts.

> Customers expect – and often prefer – multi-channel communications using the Web, social and mobile platforms in addition to print.

655M
USERS

33%
2012 GROWTH

8M
MOBILE INTERNET
ACCCESS
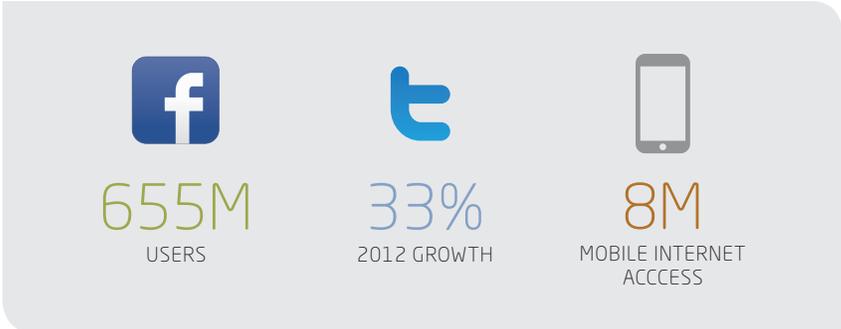
Enhancing the customer experience

Customer satisfaction and loyalty are critical success factors in the health of an organization's relationship with their consumers. Every business needs to ensure that customers are happy and that they keep coming back for more. As a result, there's a new mantra pervading business today: deliver the optimal customer experience. One way to do that is through personalized communications and relevant content.

Forrester defines Customer Experience as: how customers perceive their interactions with an organization. Personalized and relevant content and communications enhance the customer experience, particularly in light of the fact that

customers are increasingly willing to shop around to get the best price and service. As a result, managing the customer experience is a top strategic priority among industry leaders today. If your reputation is good, you win. If your reputation is poor, you lose.

A consistently great customer experience can transform satisfied customers into "brand promoters" – loyal customers who believe in your brand, buy from your company, and urge their friends and family to do the same. Positive feedback in social media from a single customer can grab the attention of hundreds of thousands of potential new customers. But if feedback is negative, the potential downside effect on your brand equity is triple-fold – lose a customer, lose the recommendation, and lose the opportunity to be considered by an entire network of future customers.

The barriers to personalization

Creating personalized communications has traditionally been a complex and costly process. Working with the technology and systems commonly requires a high degree of IT support and specialized programming expertise. As a result, even simple customizations – like changing a salutation or swapping a phone number – can take weeks to schedule, program, test and implement. This lack of agility and the need for specialized resources is a nagging barrier for many organizations, especially when spread across large volumes of communications with multiple versions and variations.

Managing personalized communications also requires a great deal of manual intervention and administration, and coordination of activities and approvals across multiple departments and personnel. One reason for this is that the content management process is typically supported by makeshift procedures and ad-hoc solutions using spreadsheets, email and paper files.

It's not uncommon for the marketing department to have their own system for tracking and controlling versions and messages, while the IT department or print services team maintains an entirely separate system for management, deployment and administration. Additional departments and stakeholders may also be involved with their own workflows and systems. The result is a jumble of disparate databases and content repositories that can hinder an organization's ability to coordinate and implement personalized communications in a timely and effective way.

Business users are often unaware of exactly what is possible with personalization, especially in the print world. Personalized and targeted print gives you the ability to leverage legacy customer communication systems in new and more effective ways. And as systems and solutions increasingly integrate multi-channel approaches, marketing organizations find that the old barriers of complexity and cost are necessarily being displaced to enable a mix of printed and multi-channel communications that provide a substantial strategic benefit.

The path forward to personalization

Companies from all industries can benefit from personalized, relevant and targeted customer communications. But reaching that goal is difficult when you depend on complex technology, cumbersome legacy systems, and specialized IT expertise.

messagepoint® BY PRINOVA

Personalized communications can be complex and costly. That's why Prinova developed Messagepoint – to enable business users to implement highly personalized and targeted communications without burdening IT.

That's why Prinova developed Messagepoint, a hybrid cloud-based customer communications management platform that enables business users to implement and manage highly personalized and targeted communications without the need for extensive programming or specialized resources. This allows for a more agile, more responsive, and less costly business approach to customized customer communications. With customer data remaining on-premise, companies can also rest assured that their data is secure.

Business unit control

Messagepoint lets you control the entire messaging lifecycle for all customer communications – both print and digital – without burdening IT. You can create personalized messages and customized content linked with customer data using text, graphics and images.

The content management and multilingual capabilities help you centralize and more easily manage complex message variations, versions and languages. You can proof documents and review changes in real-time before they go live, and the automated approval process keeps everyone on the same page in a cloud-based environment.

Multi-channel

Whether you want to communicate in print, or use online, mobile or social media, Messagepoint makes it easy to reach customers with personalized and targeted messaging. Business users and marketing specialists easily set up message content for use across multiple communications and channels.

Once the content has been created, you can deliver messages to your customers based on their behaviors, preferences, or demographics. Messagepoint lets you author targeting rules in plain business language, so you can deliver the right message to the right customer, in the right media, without having to be a programmer.

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Automated approval workflow

When generating customer communications, it can be difficult to manage the approvals of multiple versions and variations across many different departments and stakeholders; especially using ad-hoc systems and work-around processes. Messagepoint automates the review, proofing and approval process all within one cloud-based system, and eliminates long review cycle times and manual workflows.

The system sends out email notifications to workflow approvers as required, provides a central point of administration and control, and automatically tracks and records each review and approval. Using this online, automated approval process you can be sure to seamlessly involve all required stakeholders when verifying your communications meet brand standards and regulatory requirements, no matter what form they take.

Integration and tracking

Messagepoint supports whatever communication format you choose – print, email, mobile, text or Web – and allows your messages to be seamlessly integrated into your existing production systems. The Cloud-based system provides a centralized platform with the ability to track and manage each communication.

The integrated cross-channel tracking and management features let you see who received your messages and monitor the success of your communication efforts with a variety of standard and customized reports, whether you need to keep records for compliance, campaign management, internal control, or customer service.

Next steps to personalization

It's getting harder to gain the attention of customers. Now you can more effectively compete in a world awash in multi-media marketing messages with personalization – a strategic approach to creating highly relevant, targeted customer communications, cutting through the clutter of competing messages. Messagepoint from Prinova makes it easy; you control the entire messaging lifecycle for all customer communications – both print and digital – without burdening IT.

Want to learn more?

Contact us today to request a demo or visit us online at www.prinova.com/messagepoint to see Messagepoint in action.

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Notes

1. Seth Godin, Permission Marketing. Simon & Schuster
2. The Direct Marketing Association (DMA)
3. "Direct Mail Response Based on Color, Personalization, Database, and Other Factors." David Broudy and Frank Romano, Digital Printing Council
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5. "The Future of Multi-Channel Transactional Communications in the U.S." InfoTrends, June 2013.
6. The Mail Moment. USPS
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