

JUNK MAIL?

WHO SAYS?

or Is It A Case of
the Pot Calling the
Kettle Black?



Direct Mail Is Under Fire

Some years back, a group of advertising executives from newspapers across the nation gathered to address a serious problem. The problem? Newspaper advertising revenues, already diminished by the advent of electronic broadcast media, were under assault by yet another advertising medium—direct mail.

Their previous efforts to counter radio and television advertising had met with little success. Would they face yet again a loss of advertising revenue to direct mail? Clearly (in the minds of these folks) something had to be done. Display advertising, the kind found in newspapers, is respectable and uplifting, but advertising sent through the mail? Disgusting.

Well, their intentions may have been self-serving and narrow, but their talent and ability in swaying large segments of the population could not be discounted.

And sure enough, after a strenuous brain storming session they arrived at a brilliant solution. They wouldn't just try to convince advertisers that running a display ad in their newspapers would be more effective than sending advertising through the mail. No, that tack

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wouldn't suffice. A more direct attack was called for and so the term "Junk Mail" was invented.

And through the power of their news sections and their editorial pages the great smear effort was begun. The goal wasn't to protect the consumer, it was to protect their advertising revenue.

The Big Lie

The great myth was created with all sorts of imaginary horror stories to accompany it. The first, and perhaps biggest lie, was that so-called "Junk Mail" was subsidized by first class mail, the kind ordinary folks send to each other.

It made no difference that the exact opposite is true: That bulk rate mail, because of the processing paid for by the sender prior to delivery to the post office, actually subsidizes the first class letters and post cards mailed each day.

You see, both standard and non-profit bulk mail must be sorted by ZIP code and sectional centers prior to delivery to the post office. In

some cases the mail is even sorted down to the carrier route. The result is that direct mail requires a minimum of handling by the postal service and in fact encourages efficiency.

But never mind. The big lie was in force and it was working beautifully. Uninformed consumer activists and ambitious politicians used "Junk Mail" as a whipping boy to further their own ends. Never once did they rail against junk advertising in the ten pound Sunday edition of The Washington Post.

Always On Target

But the consumer knows better. The recipients of advertising mail count on receiving it because unlike a newspaper ad, direct mail can be carefully targeted to reach only those individuals who are likely to have an interest in the service or product offered. Such targeting not only matches up the item offered with the person seeking such a product or service, but it also drives down the cost. The more efficient the advertising is, the less the manufacturer or provider has to spend to promote his product. And if less is spent on advertising to bring news of the product or service to the consumer, the lower the price becomes.

And the beauty is that direct mail advertising is no more intrusive than an ad in your local newspaper or magazine. If you aren't interested, ignore it, and toss it into the trash can.

But, in fact, direct mail ads get

noticed because the prospective buyer has already been identified as someone who may be in need of the product or service.

That's why, as we near the twenty-first century, some \$400,000,000 is spent annually on direct mail advertising. No wonder. It is efficient. It is effective. And tens of thousands of men and women are employed in good direct mail advertising jobs. And this doesn't even count all the U.S. Postal employees who owe their livelihood to direct mail advertising.

The People's Choice

How much does the consumer really like direct mail advertising? Surprisingly, there is a way to measure the public's interest in direct mail. The Direct Marketing Association, the industry group representing thou-

sands of direct mail supported companies and organizations, offers two lists to the public through a vigorous advertising effort.

One list is for those who wish to have their names deleted from all direct mail solicitations. The second list is for individuals who would

like to have their names added to direct mail solicitations. Both lists

receive equal promotion.

Hold on to your hat. You guessed it. Each year more people contact the Direct Marketing Association asking to

have their name added to direct mail lists than ask to have their name deleted!

No, the Direct Marketing Association isn't rigging the program or playing tricks. That's an honest response from consumers across America.

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All You Have To Do Is Ask

So if you want your name removed from direct mail lists, just write or FAX the Direct Marketing Association at 1120 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036-6700 or 212-768-4546. Believe me, the DMA member companies and organizations will be more than happy to accommodate you. After all, they don't want to waste their time or money sending solicitations to folks who have no interest whatsoever in buying their product or service or donating to their organization.

And if you are one of the folks who would like to receive solicitations on topics of interest to you, please feel free to contact the DMA. Remember, you are in the majority and you are obviously sophisticated enough to appreciate the efficiency of direct mail.

But what, you say, about the privacy issue? Aren't direct mail advertisers invading my privacy? Haven't

they gathered personal information which they shouldn't have access to?

Frankly, this is just more misinformation which comes from either the uninformed or the self-serving. Securing a list of prospects demands the same considerations as choosing a publication in which to advertise.

Who Do You Want To Reach?

If you want to reach golfers, you don't advertise in a gardening magazine. If you want to sell your home in Kansas City, you don't advertise in the Milwaukee newspaper.

In the same vein, you select lists based on the interests of those individuals in the product or service you want to sell or the cause you want to support. And information used to put such lists together is gathered from sources you have voluntarily provided or from public information. There is no invasion of privacy! You have made the information available and now, to your benefit, it is being used to bring information on new products to you effectively and efficiently.

Hey! It's Efficient and Inexpensive!

Advertising, whether on television, radio, magazines, billboards, newspapers, direct mail, or the Internet is an important key to making the marketplace function efficiently and effectively. It does no good for a manufacturer or creator or organization to come up with new ideas if they

have no means of transmitting those ideas to the consumer. Advertising is designed to get that information to the consumer quickly and efficiently. And

in fact, direct mail is one of the most efficient means of getting information to the prospective buyer or donor.

After all, if there were a better and less expensive way to accomplish the same thing do you think the company or organization would hesitate to use it?

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A Win-Win Situation

Direct mail used for advertising or to solicit support is a win-win situation for all concerned. There are no losers. Everyone wins.

Far too often today those who fail to comprehend the wonderful mysteries of the marketplace see it as a place where someone wins and someone else loses. Nothing could be further from the truth. In the marketplace someone sells a product or service at a price they are willing and able to, and a buyer freely chooses to purchase at a price he or she is willing to pay. The seller gets money to reinvest in his business so he can work harder and come out with better products and services (maybe even at a lower

price) and the buyer gets the product or service he or she needs to live better, look better, feel better or simply enjoy.

Similarly, consumers in the marketplace, and through the direct mail advertising process, have an opportunity to pick and choose which charitable organizations they are going to support, which advocacy groups to contribute to, and which political candidates to write a check out for.

The American Way

The miracle of direct mail fund raising empowers the lady in Albuquerque, the young couple in Pittsburgh, and the elderly gentleman in Atlanta to have a genuine impact on the political process. In their freedom, they choose who they will support and who they won't support. They decide which charities deserve their voluntary contributions and which don't.

And those groups who don't generate the support they need to survive soon go out of business, exactly like for-profit companies go out of business when they don't effectively and efficiently offer goods and services the public really wants.

And make no mistake about it, the consumer is the best judge of who deserves support and who doesn't. After all, it's his money and he has a right to choose without outside control or interference.

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Continued On Back

A Free-For-All

Junk mail? Not on your life. Freedom mail might be a better description. It's what America is all about. The freedom of one individual or group to communicate with another without outside control or influence.

Or perhaps the title should be Efficient Mail, because the marketplace determines that it is the best advertising medium to use to effectively and efficiently communicate with the consumer.

Direct mail benefits everyone. The consumer saves money because a company can communicate quickly

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and efficiently with the prospective buyer, thus driving down the cost. The consumer also benefits when he is solicited for support because the cost goes down through the ability to target only those who are truly interested. And he gives only to those groups who he decides deserve support. You and I may not agree with his or her decision, but in a free society we have no right to impose our will on someone else.

Direct mail is a vital part of our heritage of freedom. It deserves our support and protection so that future generations of Americans can also benefit from its use.

Michael Hiban



Michael Hiban is Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Omega List Company. Michael joined Omega in October 1987 after graduating from the University of Maryland. His list expertise encompasses both donor and consumer lists. He is a well respected and knowledgeable list broker and manager.

Known for his candid and starkly honest appraisals of individual lists, list users throughout the nation come to Michael for list recommendations. Michael has brought a "breath of fresh air" to the list marketing industry.

Incorporated in 1975, Omega List Company is a list brokerage and management company which provides some 50,000,000 records each year to non-profit and commercial organizations. Located in the suburban Washington D.C. area, Omega is a part of the Eberle Communications Group.



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