

THE WORDS ARE THE THING

TIP: For great copy, blend the best of old and new techniques

Direct marketing copywriters are no longer crafting prose for just direct mail and print ads. Today, their words help shape a multitude of new media campaigns as well. But does that change how DM copywriters approach their craft? Bruce Henderson, group creative director/senior partner creative with Ogilvy&Mather Worldwide, New York, shares some copywriting tips.

LEARN FROM THE PAST Sure, the call to action in your direct mail piece might be a URL. But don't think that using new media means you should forget the past. "In many respects it is a brave new world, but you need grounding in the old rules," says Henderson. "In direct marketing, you need to know the product well and you need to know the audience, as well as what you're selling, why you're selling it and who you want to sell it to. And, you need to be explicit about the next action you want people to take.

HAVE A HOLISTIC VIEW OF YOUR CAMPAIGN No matter what you're writing, search should be part of your strategy, he stresses. "It's exciting to think about search intent modeling, and the *real* phrases people search when they're looking for something. Brands have their own

nomenclature, but that's not the way people think. People want to solve a problem, and they have a definition of that in their mind. So you need to think about metatags and key phrases, and incorporate that language into your web pages, letters and all your marketing communications."

GET TO THE POINT Everyone is time crunched today, so don't assume your prospect will sit down to read a lengthy direct mail piece. "I don't necessarily think that "the more you tell, the more you sell" is dead. But in general people are more reluctant to read a lot of copy. You need to think about information density in your copy. You might only be able to say 50 to 100 words in a spot ad, but then you can send them to a website for more information."
—BETH NEGUS VIVEIROS



IDEAS:

In the (Post)cards

TIP: TRY POSTCARDS TO GET YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS QUICKLY AND ECONOMICALLY

Looking to reach a new local audience in the mail, but don't have a huge budget?

Try stacking your marketing deck with postcard mailings.

All-Star Auto Repair tripled sales to prospects in the surrounding three-mile area with a postcard campaign.

"We wanted to reach those people who are in a three mile radius—that's where 80% of our customers are anyway," says Bill Buchheit, owner of the Columbia, MO-based car repair shop.

On average, All-Star sends 12,000 postcards per month to local households with incomes of between \$40,000 and \$60,000 a year that have been identified as owning at least one car.

Population density matters in All-Star's efforts. Columbia has a population of 102,324, which isn't very dense, he notes, adding that if the business was based in a more heavily populated area like St. Louis he would have mailed to a closer geographic range.

The postcards offer such things as oil changes and \$20-off coupons for service over \$100. The prices change depending on the time of year and whether it is a busy season for the shop.

Credit card processing firm Commerce Payment System Inc. is planning to vastly up its postcard marketing efforts after strong results in 2010.

The Hewlett, NY company first tested the

mailings last May. The initial three drops of 12,000 11-by-18 inch postcards resulted in 100 leads, 25 of which later converted into customers, says president Michael Mendlowitz.

Commerce Payment then rolled out the campaign, sending postcards to an average of 55,000 new businesses each month. Going forward it plans to double the number of postcards mailed, Mendlowitz says, noting that in 2011 the mailings will account for about 40% of the company's marketing expenditures.

In terms of the creative, Commerce Payment decided on a package that emphasized the single message of getting the facts about accepting credit cards, as opposed to one highlighting all the firm's services.

"Interestingly enough, the specific offer of credit card processing outpulled the other by about four times and initially, that's not what I thought would happen," says Mendlowitz, "It turned out that [the general] offer was too wide so we didn't get the response we expected."

—LARRY RIGGS



SECOND CHANCES | A GUIDE TO retesting lists

There are many variables that come into play when using a mailing list, so it seems logical to give it another try if the response the first time wasn't quite what you'd hoped. Let's look at these variables.

Mail Date: The initial mail date for your test may have been overcrowded, especially during the holidays. Check with the manager. He or she may not be able to offer you mail date protection, but he should be able to share how booked the file was at that time. You may wish to try the file again at a different, less crowded time.

Package/Premium: There may be a glut of the type of premium with your appeal at a specific time of year. Did the recipient get 14 calendars all in one week? Perhaps your premium didn't work for a specific type of list. You may want to test a different premium or even try a straight appeal.

Seasonality: Does your file seem to work bet-



ter at different times of the year? Perhaps the same holds true for the type of list you are ordering. Try ordering holiday names from the previous year for a similar (holiday) offer, especially if the most recent hotline names did not perform as strongly as you had hoped.

Cost: Perhaps the list you are ordering did not work because of the costs associated with the file. Try a different time of year when the cost to acquire a new name may be lower.

Segmentation: Perhaps there is a better segment of a file you may wish to test. Check

to see if there are product selects, dollar selects, recency and even enhancements. Brainstorming between the manager and the broker often leads to successful retest ideas.

Multichannel Marketing's Effect: Many times if a direct mail package hits the same time as an e-mail blast, it is difficult to determine if the direct mail appeal acted as a driver or catalyst to the e-mail appeal. Can you match back response? If not, try retesting at a time when the two channels can act independently to measure one's effect on the other.

World Events: When examining historical data to look at your mailer's results, be mindful of what had happened previously in the world. A list that did well when the earthquake hit in Haiti may not do as well during the same season, in the following year. Conversely, lists that hit right after a major catastrophe may not have worked due to world distraction. The economy may have been significantly worse. Try testing the list again when there are fewer variables to have any effect. —BOB STEIN, vice president of list management, Trinity Direct

RESOLVE YOUR DELIVERABILITY

TIPS AND METRICS TO CONSIDER WHEN DOING ACQUISITION AND/OR REACTIVATION MAILINGS

▶ **Consider back-tests and in-the-mail tests.** A back-test—performed after a mailing is sent out—looks at responses to see how different segments performed. In an in-the-mail test—made before a mailing goes out—a mailer keys certain segments to monitor how they perform during a mailing.

Such tests can help mailers pinpoint how many records have potential deliverability issues. A number of those can still be mailed because enough will be delivered to justify the effort.

▶ **Know your numbers.** Consider the following possible deliverability issues when determining which

records to mail:

- ✓ Non ZIP+4 coded: 50% to 70% reduction in response.
- ✓ Missing apartment number: 40% to 50% reduction in response.
- ✓ Invalid apartment number: 15% to 25% reduction in response.
- ✓ Mailing to an old address: 70% to 80% reduction in response.
- ✓ Vacant address: 40% to 60% reduction in response.

▶ **Apply change-of-address (COA) as part of campaign processing.** This should be done in addition to the normal schedule of updating customer files/databases with COA. The payback on this is significant, since mailing a piece to a person's old address normally reduces response by at least 75%.

▶ **For reactivation mailings, don't mail records with deliverability problems.** Since reactivation mailings typically perform close to break-even, the reduced performance of records with deliverability problems normally makes these not worth mailing.

For acquisition mailings, marketers can be somewhat more aggressive. They can mail some of the records with deliverability issues, as someone at the address has normally responded in the last few months. Whenever possible, don't mail to prospects with a potential old address. Mailing acquisition records with invalid apartment numbers during the holiday season can yield results that are above break-even.

▶ **Consider a reduction in mailing 3-digit ZIP Code-qualified pieces.**

Some of these can cost more than 15 cents per piece in additional postage over a carrier-route qualified piece when mailing flats — and the extra postage brings reactivation and/or acquisition mailings below break-even. (If used in conjunction with add-an-address/add-a-name, the postage savings in a campaign can be up to \$10,000 and sometimes even more.) —MIKE YAPUNICH, vice president of product management, Experian Marketing Service

GO HOME!

Tip: Want to reach your BTB audience where they live? Then literally do it—try mailing to their home address, where they won't be distracted by the work-day hubbub. High-end realty firm Chase International found success doing just that last year when they wanted to recruit new agents. —LR

