Print

Variable Data Printing

How Variable Data Printing can bring your clients' messages directly to their customer and get their attention

AM Solutions

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Introduction

As a consumer, you are bombarded by multiple attempts to get your attention at home: telemarketing calls during dinner, e-mails to your personal account, the occasional ring of your doorbell, and of course, direct mail. You make a split-second decision as to hang up, delete, ignore, trash, or perhaps listen, read, answer the door, or open the mail. As a direct mail marketer, your objective is to make your client's invitation to be that one of out of those many attempts that gets the consumer's attention. Variable Data Printing enables direct marketing to cut through the clutter.

Traditional Direct Mail

Mail used to be the main method of delivering and paying bills, receiving magazines, and forwarding advertisements. E-bills, e-payment, e-zines, and e-mail ads have dramatically reduced the volume of mail from many sources, in contrast, direct marketing continues to grow at a healthy pace. Direct mail now represents 56.2% of all mail sent in the US; direct mail expenditures rose 3.6% in 2014 to $49.7 billion.[1,2]

The problem with unaided direct mail is that it tends to be a shotgun approach, blanketing areas with the same message, yielding response rates of 2-4%. Problem is how can you improve upon that rate when there are already 160 billion pieces of mail each year competing for the customer's attention! [3]

What is Variable Data Printing?

Variable data printing (VDP) is on-demand printing in which the elements, both text and images, can be changed or customized on each piece of direct mail. How is this done? Digital printing presses utilize software which extracts information from a database and then interchanges the text or image to be printed on the page real-time. This produces a result which can be far more powerful than a mail merge; it allows a 10,000 piece run to yield 10,000 individually tailored pieces!

Data customization ranges from **basic**, in which names, addresses, and salutations are changed (like mail merge), to **versioning**, where pre-designed layouts are utilized based on variable criteria, to **full**, where elements (text, images, and structure) within the whole piece can be customized based on drawing information from multiple databases.

How Effective is VDP?

Personalization and the impact of the recipient seeing his or her name appearing in a piece that was uniquely created for them is powerful and yields improved response rates and retention.

A group of 700 senior executives in a wide range of industries were surveyed about their experience with variable data campaigns. Of these, 40% indicated that their personalized campaigns had yielded results that were more effective than those from other programs. The remainder did not notice a difference, were still refining their process, or didn't know. In cases where 10 or more campaigns were conducted, response rates averaging 6.5%, versus the 3-4% mentioned above. [4]

Conclusion

Variable Data Printing gives marketers the ability to leverage bold, visual statements and key product service information to reach the individual current or potential customer. By extracting valuable database information and delivering it electronically to the digital press, VDP delivers a personalized message right to the mailbox of the targeted customer.

Once the message has been received and read, the next challenge is to get an affirmative response from the customer. That's where the use of Personalized URLs (PURLs) comes in. Read more about PURLs in AM Solution's "What are PURLs?" white paper.

[1] Marketing Profs Direct Mail Marketing, Direct Profit
[2] Franklin Data Empowered Direct Marketing
[3] "Statistically Speaking: Direct Mail Soars to New Heights" Deliver Magazine
[4] Marnie, B. The Response Rates of Personalized Cross-Media Marketing Campaigns-Mindfire