



DIRECT FORUM

VOLUME 4. ISSUE 4

* * * * APRIL 2008 * * * *

Direct Forum is a free e-mail newsletter containing useful direct marketing tips, news updates and how-to information. It's convenient, informative and I am not trying to sell you anything!

This month's topics include:

- 1. THE POWER OF AN UNEXPECTED GESTURE**
- 2. THE WEEKNESS OF AN UN-TIMELY RESONSE**
- 3. HOW TO ADD MORE PUNCH TO YOUR LETTER**
- 4. IN DEFENCE OF ALL CREATIVE PEOPLE IN OUR BUSINESS**
- 5. IT Baffles MY MIND. CAN SOMEBODY PLEASE HELP EXPLAIN THIS?**

THE POWER OF AN UNEXPECTED GESTURE



I have just rapped up teaching my forth semester students at Seneca College and don't expect to see them as they head into the real world.

However, I just got an email from one of my students that I would like to share with you.

*Hello Billy,
 I just wanted to thank you for being such a motivating teacher. You have taught us a lot and I really appreciate the way you allow us to be your colleague and not your students. I really have learned a lot from you and want to thank you!
 Enjoy the coming months and hope to see you later!
 Ashley Yankana*

Now how great is that?

Anyone who receives an unexpected gift from or an unanticipated 'thank you' knows how extremely valuable and touching it can be. And yet we fail to translate this little gesture in our direct marketing plans.

It's called 'surprise and delight' and it's a powerful handy little tool.

While loyalty reward programs may lure participants to migrate or switch they do little to retain customers.

The most advanced technological system or sophisticated CRM system won't assure retention of loyalty from your customers if in fact, we don't understand the simple fact: ***That 'recognition' is often as valuable or even more important than a 'reward.'***

Remember the old saying, **"it's the thought that counts."**

If there is one thing I have learned, it's that direct marketing is all about paying attention to these little details. They are the key to success in many of my projects. Let me show you what I mean.

Last summer I mailed a small gift, a chain made of beads with the names spelled out, of a small segment of Integra donors to thank them for their past support. We added a short message that read:



*"Dear Mr. Sample,
As one of our premier supporters, your past donations are greatly appreciated by us and the children you help.*

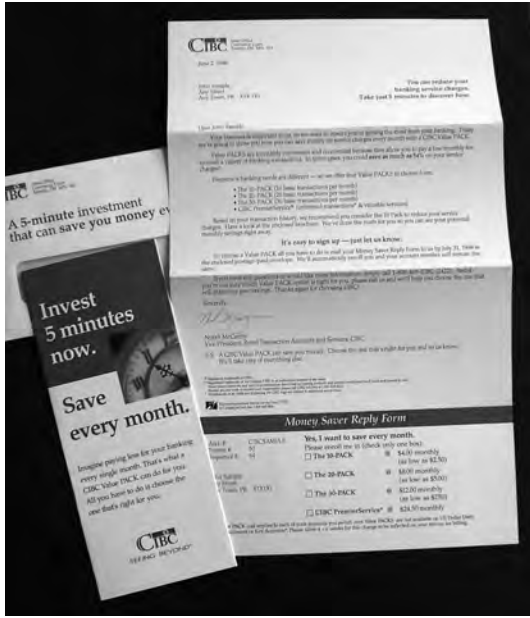
If we haven't said so lately, "thank you from both of us for your valuable support." Please accept this little token of our appreciation.

In less than 3 weeks the response was over 14% and the ROI was 12 times the investment.

I remember, when I worked at Brann Worldwide, I created a "surprise & delight" campaign for one of CIBC's Credit Card.

The client tested our proposal at focus groups across Canada with extremely positive results. In fact the focus group moderator started her findings with the words, "The Agency should be very proud of these results."

The reaction we got from cardholders who participated in the focus group was "priceless". They were thrilled with



subtle unexpected touches that we proposed from their bank.

Unfortunately, our enthusiasm was short lived when the CIBC Group head moved to another institution and the project was scrapped before it even took off.

Another great-unexpected token of appreciation that I just read about was from a Parisian Department Store in the heart of the city. They wrote to their high-end customers and guaranteed them 'free valet parking'. Sales shot up by 25%

Wall-Mart has a greeter at their door that welcomes regular customers by name. **Prada's** loyal customers are given a sleek Prada Loyalty Card, with an embedded ID chip that allows sales associates to identify customers by swiping their cards and pulling up their last sales and other valuable information about them.

Remember, direct marketing is expensive. Using the knowledge to identify your most loyal customers and expressing a way to recognize them is a bargain.

THE WEEKNESS OF AN UN-TIMELY RESONSE

I just read about a very interesting presentation made by **Tom Gaffny**, Executive Vice President of **Epsilon** at the 2008 DMA Nonprofit Federation's Conference in Washington, D.C.

He made online contributions of \$15 to 145 nonprofit organizations and then tracked their responses.

His findings were fascinating, and also quite astonishing.

- 73 sent him a one or two line "thank you" during that first few days
- 50 sent him a short, warm email reply from a real person
- 18 sent him a long email thanking him while 3 sent a postal letter instead
- 7 blasted him with over 50 emails since he gave
- He did receive a postal thank you from 57 organizations finally
- And ongoing postal mail solicitations from 83 organizations



- 49 never even acknowledged his gift or sent him anything else again
- Only 8 sent him a real “welcome” communication

His conclusion and biggest takeaway: **“Everybody’s got a site...very few have a real destination”**

Which brings me to another important point.

How would you feel if you helped somebody and they kept silent and did not respond?

Many charities today unfortunately respond that way. They tell you that you will get a tax-exemption receipt at the end of the fiscal year for your donation.

No instant thank you. Go figure!

With all the new tools at our disposal like telephones, text messaging, social networks that unite us, plus emails and mail. How hard is it to say ‘thank you’ immediately and provide instant gratification in real time?

HOW TO ADD MORE PUNCH TO YOUR LETTER

Years ago I read about a case study that tested two ‘Final Notice’ letters. The only difference between them was the first line of the letter.

The first one read.

*Dear Customer,
Our records indicate that your ‘Service Contract’ covering your General Electric refrigerator has expired.*

The second one started like this.

*Dear Customer,
A family in your area just paid out over \$200 for repairs to one of their major appliances. Another family needed the same repairs. They didn’t pay a penny. What was the difference? A GE Service contract.*

As you may have guessed, the second one beat the first one handily.



Why?

Because, the second one came out punching and packed the lead with an involving line, it hooked the reader long enough for them to understand the benefit of a Service Contract.

Why wait to tell your reader about the benefits at the bottom of your letter or hide them in the copy of the text?

Chances are the reader may never get to them.

Think of great boxers they try and land their fist big punch quickly. Better still take the advice of **David Ogilvy** who showed us how vital the first line or headline is with proof from one of his most famous ad for Rolls Royce.

The headline read, ***“At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise in this new Rolls Royce comes from the electric clock”.***

This famous headline is one he worked on, edited and rewrote over a hundred times till he was satisfied that it would instantly draw the reader in.

So, It’s not what you say it’s how you say it right at the start.

I am a firm believer in this theory. Just look at the hundreds of acquisition solicitations being produced by charities alone. We are all appealing to the same group of people, yet some work while others do not.

Those appeals that do work must have touched a nerve in the recipient’s right from the start to make them read on and respond. **I believe the magic is in the storytelling not just the story itself. And getting them hooked at the start is all-important.**

IN DEFENCE OF ALL CREATIVE PEOPLE IN OUR BUSINESS

The recent writers’ strike in Los Angeles, proved the importance of creative people as it nearly crippled the TV and film production companies.

Yet, if you ask any writer in our business, he or she will tell you that, once in a while, a client hires them for their expertise but then proceeds to tell them how to do their job.

This rarely happen in any other profession that I can think of, nobody tells a doctor how to do his job or calls up a plumber to fix a leak and then proceed to tell them how to do it.

Then why does it happen in our profession so often?

Is writing so easy that everyone can do it?

Or is everybody an expert when it comes to advertising and direct marketing?

Oh! Yes, I forgot, everybody has an opinion about what is good or bad when it comes to advertising and direct marketing. Everybody is more than willing to express their expertise on the subject at the drop of a hat as to what irritates or pleases them.

That's fair because after all, it is directed at consumers so they are the judges.

But, rarely do these same people profess that they can do a better job themselves, they are happy to be critics.

Part of the blame lies with us. I know many large agencies and clients ask their staff to create advertising or direct marketing material. Even though many have no prior training at all. Many even have extensive swipe files to mimic or steal ideas from.

The other part of the problem lies with our clients. As evidenced by the many used car or retail TV commercials produced by clients themselves.

Like golf, creating a good direct mail or advertising piece is an art that requires talent, dedication and love for what we do for a living. It is this love of creation that drives us to doggedly keep on improving our craft.

Sure, anyone can learn to hit the ball and, given enough strokes, one may even score a hole in one occasionally and many might even become pretty good with practice

and improve their average score. But the majority of the time, they are hooking or slicing uncontrollably.

They never play a consistent game. The key to success in golf is technique, practice and experience. If you do the

right things consistently, you'll play a good game every time. Well, at least most of the time!

Similarly in copywriting or art direction— we hone our skills to try and perform consistently each time. It takes a lot of time and effort to learn how to do that and we try and to improve our performance and score each time.

So, all I ask on behalf of all creative people is some respect and the latitude to do our job. After all, it's the clients who will benefit in the long run.

Lets all remember the writers' strike in 'Tinsel-town'.

IT Baffles My Mind. Can Somebody Help Explain This?

Recently, for two of my not-for-profit clients we have either rented a list or traded one through one of the largest list brokers.

The list broker emailed us a signed statement, assuring us that all the people on the list had opted in to either having their name traded or rented.

However, in both cases, many of the recipient's of the acquisition package were irate at having received a solicitation from a new charity.

Some people were literally abusive on the phone but worse still some were so angry that they actually put junk mail in the BRE and returned it.

What gives?

I can understand the frustration of receiving a solicitation from someone you may not know. But these are supposed to be people who have helped a charity in the past, these are supposed to be whose that are generous at heart.

Think about it. Charities need help. If someone doesn't

wish to support them that fine, but why punish them?

It baffles my mind. Can somebody help explain this?

I would love to hear from anyone. Anybody? Please email me at: designersinc@sympatico.ca

OPT IN, OPT OUT, OPTIONS:

- To unsubscribe, send me an e-mail simply saying, "Please, remove".
- To participate, send me an e-mail with your suggestions.
- To post a comment, please include your name, e-mail address and your thoughts.

Let me remind you again that your name and/or e-mail address will never be shared, sold, circulated, or passed along to anyone else.

© **Designers Inc.**

1407-99 Harbour Square,
Toronto, ON
M5J 2H2

Tel: 416-203-9787

Fax: 416-203-3568

Email: designersinc@sympatico.ca

Web: www.designersinc.ca