



DIRECT FORUM

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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. TAKE MY 'WORD' FOR IT**
- 2. WHAT ARE THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT THINGS WHEN COMPOSING AN EMAIL?**
- 3. ONE MORE PLUG FOR DIRECT MARKETING**
- 4. ENDING ON A POSITIVE NOTE**

TAKE MY 'WORD' FOR IT

Here are a few examples of how to convert dry facts into compelling sentences.

GIVE RELEVANT INFORMATION WITH STATISTICAL DATA AND CLARIFY IT WITH ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE.

If statistics are key to your message, of course you must include them, but keep in mind it's hard for readers to wrap their hearts around numbers. So at the risk of feeling like Mary Poppins, strengthen the impact of your numbers by adding anecdotal evidence and your medicine should go down easily.

Example 1: YKK accounts for 51% of the world's zipper supply. The company produces 1.1 million miles of zippers annually—enough to circle the earth 44 times!

Example 2: This year, Second Harvest delivered about 15,000 meals or over 5.5 million pounds of food to approximately 250 social service programs, including emergency shelters, soup kitchens, to community and after school programs in the GTA.— That's fresh, nutritious meals to the working poor, the elderly on fixed incomes, people who have lost their jobs, the homeless—many of whom who are facing mental illness or addiction problems, abused women living in shelters, single parent

families and their children.

WHAT ARE THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT THINGS WHEN COMPOSING AN EMAIL?

FIRST, THE SUBJECT LINE

A: You only have a few seconds to capture your reader's attention.

The subject line dictates whether or not people will actually read what you have to say or simply delete it immediately. Remember, with all the messages bombarding people today, they have probably developed some form of 'selective intake' mechanism.

- **Make it interesting (tease or arouse curiosity)**
- **Make it timely**
- **Make it pertinent.**

Making the subject line interesting: *"How early can experts predict your child's future?"*

Make it timely: *"Help send drinking water to the flood victims of Brazil."*

Make it pertinent: *"Last Call for Members to enter the Awards Show at reduced prices."*

B: Make it short, no more than 50 characters

Email formats vary in length as to how many characters your reader can see, so be on the safe side.

C: Avoid symbols

Words such as Free, Sale, or symbols like \$,!, CAPS, will land the email in the spam filter.

SECOND, THE EMAIL ITSELF

A: Make it scannable

Most people scan email messages. What catches their attention?

- Salutation
- First sentence
- Short paragraphs
- Underlines (use sparingly—only as hyperlinks)
- Graphic inserts
- Bolded or italic sentences (use sparingly)
- Bulleted lists



- Closing
- Identity of signer or sender
- P.S.
- Free offers
- Things to click on
- Interactive features (forward to a friend)

B: Make it short

Get to the point quickly. Present just one or two messages max.

C: Consider the 'preview pane'

Preview panes reveal a small part of your message — the tip of the email on top. Consider the preview panel as precious real estate — your best chance to entice the reader further.

D: Consider the medium

Emails are less formal and tighter than direct mail pieces. While a dm letter starts with salutations like, “Dear Mr. Doe,” emails say “Hi Joe,” or “Hello Joe,”

The language is more colloquial, cryptic and casual.

Example: Just got home and wanted to fire off this message. Heard on the radio that parts of Brazil were flooded.

You’ve sponsored a child in the region so I’ll keep you aware of the situation and how you can help during the crisis.

Stay tuned.

Billy Sharma

ONE MORE PLUG FOR DIRECT MARKETING

Direct marketing is one of the oldest methods used to sell products and services.

The book, *A History of Direct Marketing*, by **Nat Ross**, Professor of Marketing, New York University, 1985, reported that it dates back to the Middle Ages, when **Aldus Manutius** of Venice, a publisher, brought out a catalogue of 15 texts which he had published, which were the precursors of the paperback books of today.



Certainly seed and nursery catalogues were in existence as early as 1667, when **William Lucas**, an English gardener, mailed a printed price list of available seeds and plants.

Yet, despite its age and the challenges it has faced from so many other communications methods, direct marketing is definitely the most resilient by far.

“It is interesting that nothing has killed off the printed word,” mused **Lionel Hunt** of Australia’s **Lowe Hunt & Partners**. *“Not radio, not cinema, not television, not even the Internet, which is still largely a print medium anyway.”*

If television reduces us to passive recipients, direct marketing calls us to act or react.

From banks to non-profits, hundreds of organizations continue to use direct marketing to inform, sell, recruit new customers and boost loyalty.

ENDING ON A POSITIVE NOTE

As the year slowly fades away to memory, I have had time to reflect on my good fortune and be thankful.

I met a lot of interesting people when I interviewed them for my column in *Direct Marketing*. (This year they included: *Dean Hughes* - Director, Direct Marketing **UNICEF Canada**, *Rob Wyers* - Creative Director **Wyers Direct Inc.**, *Carmen Toth* - Senior Copywriter **Rapp Collins**, *Steve Mast* - Vice President, Managing Director **Delvinia Group of Companies**, *Duke Smith* - President **Direct Point Group, Inc.**, *Rick Jones* - President **DMAT**, *Steve Hubley* - V.P & Consultant, Client Development **The Responsive Marketing Group Inc.**, *Sachi Mukerjee* - President **UpsideDown Communications Ltd.**, *Brian Langerfield* - Creative Director **Wunderman**, *Greg McKinnon* - President **McKinnon Management Group Inc.**, *Richard Toker* - President **RICH Content** and *Kaksha Mehta* - Marketing Head, Marketing Channels & Transformation **RBC Royal Bank**

I have had the pleasure of working with many current and new clients from Canada to the USA. (Logos of some of the clients are alongside)



I continue to teach my favourite subject, 'Direct Marketing', to even larger groups of students at both **Humber** and **Seneca Colleges**.

I have seen this newsletter audience grow substantially this year.

And I have had the honour of being asked to act as a 'Consultant' or 'Guest Lecturer' by charities, agencies, associations and institutions.

Thank you all.
Billy

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