

Accuracy is Everything

The merger of digital and direct brings data into the spotlight, creating new challenges in the new world of direct marketing.

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The world of direct marketing has changed. It now touches every area of the marketing mix and digital and direct are increasingly being referred to in the same breath. These changes have introduced many different disciplines, channels, skills and debates into the industry. Ai has created this supplement with Precision Marketing to start to explore some of the challenges that 'new world direct marketing' has brought with it.

Whilst the definition of direct marketing itself may be changing to include a broader field of activities, the techniques that underpin the discipline have been gradually evolving and refining, becoming more prevalent than ever.

Consumer purchases are increasingly driven by online research and this ultimately gives the marketer less control over their organisation's corporate message.

The role of data is now imperative not only because it reveals the desires of the prospective buyer but also because it guides the marketer on how and through which channel their potential buyers prefer to consume. This is a critical factor in a world of ever-changing technology and ever-multiplying media.

The digital revolution has forced the marketing industry to change the way in which it interacts with its consumers. The marketer now has to



consider that consumers have a preference in how they wish to purchase and an opinion on how they want to be communicated with.

Communicating through the right channel at the optimum time is now more important than ever.

The introduction of Web 2.0 has placed an increased focus on online interaction and opinion sharing over the Internet. Many of the emerging big brands with significant influence are now online communities like Myspace and Utube. The continued growth of price comparison websites like Confused.com and Money Supermarket are introducing new elements into the consumer's buying process. Consumer purchases are increasingly driven by online research and this ultimately gives marketers less control over their organisations corporate message.

Aligning brand values and messages across every single marketing channel is a growing challenge in the present landscape; the Internet introduces issues around the deliverability of information and brings with it a totally new transactional experience that has never been present in any other media.

Maintaining a consistent dialogue with prospective buyers also becomes more complex as we

realise that the web isn't a marketing channel but an information channel, where consumers can seek out competitive reviews, rumours and other buyers' opinions with ease.

To obtain any sort of control over messaging it is now extremely important that customer data and corporate information is up to date and accurate.

Consumers are more likely to respond to relevant and dynamic communication, in which there are references to historic interactions and key information such as locality and past purchases, along with requests for consumer feedback, which will in turn prompt further communication.

There is now the opportunity to track and respond to objections from existing customers and the opinions of prospective ones. This development provides organisations with the potential to develop a new communication strategy which, if implemented effectively, could create an entire community of customer advocates.

To maximise the potential of the increasing amount of data that consumers are making available to us through the introduction of new channels, we need to be able to select, refine and integrate this information efficiently and effectively.

The reality is that duplicate customers, inconsistent item descriptions, inaccurate targeting data

and deceased and gone-away files not only lead to costly marketing activities, they can now also lead to an online debate where disgruntled consumers can share their frustrations with the rest of the world.

In addition to this, the ever-evolving and complex regulatory compliance is now beginning to equate data inaccuracy with criminal liability.

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As a supplier, Ai has recognised that the success of the new world of direct marketing is extremely reliant on the accuracy of customer and prospect information and we have created this supplement with Precision Marketing to start to explore some of the challenges that 'new world direct marketing' has bought with it.