WHAT'S WORKING IN DIRECT MAIL

Putting Recipients In Control Through Self-Service Gifting

DEMAND GEN REPORT®

INTRODUCTION

The attention economy is currently in a recession: Marketers only have up to eight seconds to capture buyers' interests and stand out in the sea of sameness. To that end, practitioners are shifting their direct mail strategies to deliver tactile, personalized elements across all stages of the sales funnel to better engage prospects.

"Direct mail isn't just for door openers anymore," said Samantha Nohava, VP, Global Marketing and Demand Generation, for **Blue Yonder,** a digital supply chain cloud provider. "It has really become a full-funnel tactic or strategy that can be used across the entire buyer's journey. Less has become more; it doesn't need to be an iPad or a fancy set of headphones. The sending of small but thoughtful gifts that are aligned to the buyer's specific relationship is certainly trending and getting attention."

According to the **U.S. Postal Service**, direct mail recipients purchased 28% more items and spent 28% more than someone who didn't get that piece of direct mail. But gifting campaigns aren't as simple as tossing some swag in a box and slapping an address on it; successful direct mail strategies require a deep understanding of the recipient, their values and where they are in their buying cycle.

Throughout this special report, we'll discuss the current best practices and successful strategies occurring in the direct mail and corporate gifting space. Powered by expert interviews and real-world case studies, we'll discuss:

- How to track the success of direct mail campaigns;

- The strategies practitioners are leveraging to create hybrid sending strategies;

- How companies are being mindful of sustainability and environmental concerns when crafting direct mail campaigns; and

- What sending strategies are most successful across various stages of the sales funnel.

IDENTIFYING & ADAPTING TO
BUYERS' CHANGING PREFERENCES

The modern B2B buyer is a fickle beast — **66% are now self-serving more information** before contacting vendors, and **55% have decided** against buying something online due to privacy concerns. These preferences require marketers to pivot personalization strategies, and today's direct mail tactics help practitioners balance those desires. Given the innovations in data and technology, marketers no longer need to scrape the web to dig up relevant pieces of prospect information.

"Direct mail has become easier than ever to execute because it's no longer a research-intensive, manual ordering process," said Brittany Guidetti, Sr. Growth Marketing Manager at revenue growth agency **Intelligent Demand**. "You don't even need a mailing address anymore — you can set up a triggered campaign that will ask for mailing address verification first via email from the contact, then will automatically ship upon verification."

As part of those triggered campaigns, practitioners are utilizing "magic links," which are customized links that are embedded into electronic outreach. When these links are clicked, recipients are transported to a customized microsite that puts them in control.

"Magic links are easily added into an outreach sequence and allow recipients to pick whatever gift they want," said Peter Tarrant, ABM Manager of accounting software platform **Tipalti**, in his **#B2BMX** session. "They bring recipients to a personalized landing page that allows the lead to pick a gift and allows you to capture all of their information."

With sustainability top of mind for buyers — almost **70% of consumers** in the U.S. and Canada believe it's important for a brand to be environmentally sustainable or eco-friendly — these types of sending marketplaces can cut down unwanted gifts that might end up in a landfill. However, leveraging a platform with a self-serve marketplace is only the first step to meeting environmental needs; the other component is reducing the amount of packing peanuts.

"I try to consider the amount of packaging used in our sends as well as the usability/longevity of the items I'm sending," said Guidetti. "For example, if I send a gift, I'd like to send something that I know the individual will use or appreciate and that it won't just end up in the garbage in a few weeks."

Proof Point

During his #B2BMX case study presentation, Tarrant explained that Tipalti was running a disjointed direct mail strategy: The company contracted an agency for branded swag, went directly to vendors to source and choose gifts and struggled to secure high-quality items. The company implemented **Postal.io's** gifting platform to automate those manual processes. A key component of Postal's offerings were those magic links, which brought prospects to customized landing pages and marketplaces. Through the partnership, Tipalti generated $3 million in revenue in just five months.

STRATEGICALLY ORCHESTRATING
SENDS ACROSS THE BUYER'S JOURNEY

As direct mail budgets increase — **69% of practitioners** plan to increase direct mail spending in 2023, of which 18% will increase by more than 20% — marketers are becoming more strategic in how they allocate the spend. To maximize campaign effectiveness, organizations are taking a holistic view of the buyer's journey and folding in direct mail where appropriate.

"Direct mail is a full funnel tactic and should be treated as such," said Blue Yonder's Nohava. "As marketers inadvertently try to make direct mail the only touch or a siloed touch, they won't find success or develop an appreciation for how successful the tactic could be."

As practitioners orchestrate their direct mail sending campaigns, they're focusing on the early-, mid- and late-stages of the funnel. Predictably, the sends become more customized and personalized for accounts as they progress deeper into their buying journey. According to Guidetti:

- **Lightly customized gifts**, such as personalized event invitations or gift cards, are most successful at the early stages to increase brand awareness;

- **More specific, product-centric gifts**, such as a gift box with a free trial link included, do well at the middle- and late-stages to keep accounts and leads engaged; and

- **Occasional gifts of appreciation**, such as holiday-themed outreach, are useful to share with existing customers to strengthen the relationship.

With that generalized framework in mind, practitioners can then customize their sending strategies based on what items generate the best results. To determine what gifts are resonating and monitor the health of campaigns, Guidetti stressed the "huge role" data plays.

"You'll want to use data to segment your audience to ensure what you're sending is relevant, compelling and driving the results you're looking for," she explained. "You'll also want to reference data to determine the success of the effort and how you might improve or optimize the campaign moving forward. It's critical that you are reporting on the right KPIs."

Proof Point

Guidetti shared that Intelligent Demand sends a holiday campaign each year for existing clients to demonstrate appreciation. Acknowledging that a lot of people suffer from seasonal depression despite the joy of the holiday season, the company created a campaign called "8 Ways You Brighten Our Days." Each client received a light therapy lamp and a holiday card that featured a link to a digitally animated version. Guidetti explained that the campaign achieved a 99% delivery completion rate and 57% of recipients viewed the digital card.

TRACKING THE SUCCESS OF DIRECT MAIL TO PROVE ROI

Traditionally, direct mail was treated as a one-off tactic because its results were black and white: No answer means a disinterested recipient; a booked meeting indicates the opposite. But with **almost 50% of businesses** intending to increase the frequency of their gift-giving, practitioners are tasked with coloring in the gray areas to better demonstrate the strategy's worth.

Nohava said that when analyzing direct mail success, Blue Yonder views the strategy in two ways: Either as a vehicle to deliver a particular message, such as an email, or an individual tactic that acts as the primary driver to send an offering.

"When it comes to the actual metrics, there are a lot more metrics to look at than some other tactics," she explained. "You want to monitor gifts sent and the dollar amounts of those gifts, the number of gifts accepted, the opportunities generated and the way that it carries a prospect through the funnel to inevitably become closed-won business."

To track that information, practitioners are utilizing magic links and QR codes to tie a recipient's experience back to digital tactics. To inform future sends, Tarrant added that practitioners need insights into the gifts that were most popular amongst prospects and compare that to the sends favored by sales.

"You want an overview into what items are the most popular, what the sales team sends most frequently and what items have the highest rate of acceptance," said Tarrant. "You also want a to track spending by team and individually, so you have visibility into who's orchestrating the most successful sends and who might need a slap on the wrist for blowing through the budget with no results to show for it."

Proof Point

Paycor, an HR and payroll solution, needed to decrease the cost and time spent managing the company's direct mail marketing program while increasing sales pipeline. The company turned to a direct mail provider that provided address verification to optimize sending, enabled personalization inside its existing marketing automation platforms and shared insights into cross-channel campaigns. Since partnering with the company, Paycor demonstrated a 209% sales opportunity generation goal and saved $160K in print and fulfillment costs.

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CONCLUSION

If there's one universal truth, it's that people love free stuff. But in the business world, recipients are more discerning about the items they want to receive. Branded stress balls and engraved pens no longer cut it — practitioners need to capitalize on personalization, meet buyers' self-service preferences and provide prospects with items that are useful.

"It's all about sending small but thoughtful gifts aligned to buyers' specific position in the funnel to build relationships," said Nohava. "The direct mail market is so noisy, and those traditional 'spray-and-pray' campaigns won't cut it. Prospects want gifts that speak to their needs."
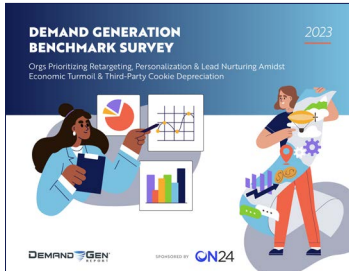
Demand Generation Benchmark Survey

What's Working In Buyer Engagement

State Of Full-Funnel Demand Generation

Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multichannel demand generation efforts.

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