

Making 'Green' Marketing More Fulfilling

GREEN MARKETING NOT ONLY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BOOST BRAND ESTEEM AND WIN GREATER CUSTOMER LOYALTY; IF APPLIED TO THE MARKETING PROCESS ITSELF, IT CAN SAVE MONEY AND ADD "GREEN" TO THE COMPANY'S BOTTOM LINE. THIS ARTICLE DISCUSSES THE IMPORTANT ROLE FULFILLMENT CAN PLAY IN MAKING MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY, AS WELL AS MORE EFFECTIVE.

Interest in environmental issues has surged in the wake of two seasons of devastating hurricanes, soaring oil prices, pictures of melting icebergs and stranded polar bears, and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to former Vice President Al Gore for his work in raising environmental awareness.

- According to the 2008 Green Gap Survey, conducted by Cone LLC and the Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship, almost 40% of Americans are preferentially buying products they believe to be environmentally friendly.
- The 2008 Gallup Environment Poll found that 28% of Americans reported making "major changes" in their lifestyles to protect the environment.
- Market research firm Mintel reports that almost 200 million Americans now buy green products.

Marketers have caught on to the benefits that green marketing can bring to their brands and have deluged the airwaves, print media and internet with environmentally oriented messaging. But there's danger in making green claims without supporting evidence. For example, claiming that a product is Energy Star® compliant when it doesn't appear on the official EPA registered product list may lead to charges of "greenwashing," causing customers and prospects to distrust future marketing messages.

Consumer recall of advertising with green messaging is very high, with 37% of consumers saying they frequently recall green messaging and an additional 33% recalling it occasionally.

Source: Burst Media

Additionally, green products must offer a benefit beyond just being green. Consumers won't buy your product unless it also fulfills a need, want or interest for them. When consumers are convinced of the desirable "non-green" benefits of environmental products, they are more inclined to adopt them, according to marketing gurus Jacquelyn Ottman, Edwin Stafford and Cathy Hartman.¹ The five desirable benefits most commonly associated with green products are efficiency and cost effectiveness; health and safety; performance; symbolism and status, and convenience.

Ottman, Stafford and Hartman go on to say that consumers are most likely to act on green messages that strongly connect to their personal environments. Specifically, they prefer such environmental household product benefits as "safe to use around children," "no toxic ingredients," "no chemical residues," and "no strong fumes" over such benefits as "packaging can be recycled" or "not tested on animals."

More than 40% of consumers frequently or occasionally research the claims made in green advertisements.

Source: *Burst Media*

More advice for successful green marketing from Ottman, Stafford and Hartman includes:

- Frame environmental product attributes as “solutions” for consumer needs (for example, “rechargeable batteries offer longer performance”).
- Position your eco-friendly products as performing as well as, or better than, alternative products.
- Broaden mainstream appeal by bundling or adding consumer-desired value into environmental products.
- Employ environmental product and consumer benefit claims that are specific, meaningful, unpretentious, and qualified (that is, compared with comparable alternatives or likely usage scenarios).
- Procure product endorsements or eco-certifications from trustworthy third parties, and educate consumers about the meaning behind those endorsements and eco-certifications.
- Encourage consumer evangelism via consumers’ social and Internet communication networks with compelling, interesting, and/or entertaining information about environmental products.

The buzz around sustainability grew 50% last year. Given the dozens of new books, TV specials, Earth Day events and green advertising campaigns, it’s safe to say the buzz will continue for awhile.

Source: *Neilsen BuzzMetrics*

BUT IS YOUR MARKETING GREEN?

Beyond these tips for green marketing, there are a number of ways in which you can make your marketing communications themselves more environmentally friendly. Your fulfillment vendor can play an important role by:

- 1. Implementing policies at its own facilities that reduce negative impact on the environment.** The vendors with which you choose to partner should be as green as your company claims to be. Choose a fulfillment partner that takes steps to reduce its own carbon footprint by using energy efficient lighting in warehouse facilities; reducing energy needs by keeping dock doors and bays closed at all times to better control climate; recycling paper, cardboard and other materials in all facilities; avoiding polystyrene in favor of packing paper, which is biodegradable, and recycling discarded office documents. (Be sure they securely shred documents with sensitive or personally identifiable data first!)
- 2. Using more recycled and environmentally friendly materials for your print projects.** Each printed page has an environmental impact, from the fiber content to the weight to the chemical processes involved. Digital printing, offered by better fulfillment vendors, works well on recycled stock.
- 3. Making sure your materials can be delivered.** Misdelivered or undeliverable mail generally ends up in a landfill. Your fulfillment vendor can help you avoid this kind of waste through regular updating and cleaning of your lists. Your vendor can (and should) do routine zip code corrections, address standardization, checks against the National Change of Address Linkage System, and DMA mail preference service, to list just a few resources. Additionally, your vendor can help with merge and purge to eliminate duplicates, opt in / opt out, suppression files, test mailings and more.

4. Optimizing your marketing communications. While recycling your scrap paper used to be all you needed to do to call your business green; today's environment demands more. The richest shade of green is the one that's green from start to finish – in other words, optimizing your communications from initial concept through production, delivery and recycling. Optimization includes using customer-centric marketing techniques – sending only relevant information to targeted market segments, rather than large volumes of generic materials to everyone – which can greatly reduce your volume of printed, stored and distributed material. It also includes streamlining production and distribution methods for greater efficiency, further reducing your environmental impact. Optimizing your communications is potentially the most powerful technique available to marketers.

A CLOSER LOOK AT OPTIMIZATION

Optimization starts with a comprehensive evaluation and rationalization of all of your company's communication materials and distribution options. Marketing materials should be examined and evaluated in relation to:

- target audience
- purpose
- value of the sale or lead
- quantities
- useful life
- delivery method

The main goals are to increase the production efficiency of the communication process and to produce only the materials that are needed. A major added benefit is an increase in the effectiveness of the communication process. Response rates are improved by sending only materials that are relevant to recipients' needs or interests. Increasing relevance through customized text and graphics, as well as personalization, has been shown by numerous studies to boost response rates, size of sales and repeat sales.

You should also analyze current production and delivery methods. If a particular piece is used in only limited circumstances, it may make sense to keep it only as an electronic file that can be transmitted via the Internet. Alternatively, it could be stored electronically and digitally printed only when and in the quantities needed. Digital printing is inherently more eco-friendly than offset because it enables cost-effective printing of small quantities, even in full color. Additionally, printing is done at the fulfillment company, eliminating the need for packing and shipping from a separate facility. It can also be done on a distributed basis. Producing only the material needed, can limit printing volumes and costs; decrease or eliminate storage; cut delivery costs; and shrink or eradicate waste.

Alternatively, high-value or high-volume pieces may warrant full-color offset print. Depending on audience, value of sale, usage and other factors, you can also use a combination of black digital print on demand (POD) on plain paper; black digital POD on color offset shell; color digital POD on white paper; a combination of digital POD and offset; and dynamic digital POD.

Optimization can reduce overall communication materials costs by 30% or more. Increases in the effectiveness of the material are harder to quantify, but increases in response rates greater than 100% have been realized.

Here's an example:

A national health insurance company's provider network can include thousands of doctors, hospitals and ancillary care facilities that accept one or more of their insurance plans. In the pre-digital era, such insurers would print up a huge book listing the name, address and phone number of every provider, along with the plans they accepted and other pertinent data. These books would be mailed to every person they insured. Additionally, the insurer had to mail periodic updates, as new providers joined their networks and others dropped out. The costs to produce, print and mail these documents were enormous.

In today's data-driven world, those same insurers can digitally print and send each person a customized list of doctors and hospitals within a given radius of their home or work place. The insured gets just the information he or she needs, and the insurer saves money on production, delivery and waste.

CONCLUSION

Customer-centric marketing and other green initiatives can work together to generate positive, environmentally conscious results. With an understanding of how efficient management of printing and fulfillment programs can reduce waste and negative environmental impact, marketers can save money and deliver targeted marketing materials that increase ROI, while demonstrating commitment to sustainable marketing practices.

ABOUT IRON MOUNTAIN FULFILLMENT SERVICES

With almost 40 years of experience in the business, Iron Mountain Fulfillment Services, Inc. offers the most advanced combination of fulfillment and digital print communication solutions for targeted and personalized outreach. We partner with clients to increase customer response rates, expand marketing opportunities and reduce costs. All of our facilities nationwide are in full compliance with California environmental regulations and standards (the most stringent and comprehensive regulations in the country). To learn more about Iron Mountain Fulfillment Services, please visit www.ironmountain.com/fulfillment.

FOOTNOTES

¹ "Avoiding Green Marketing Myopia," Jacquelyn A. Ottman, Edwin R. Stafford and Cathy L. Hartman, published in *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, Vol. 48., No. 5, June 2006.

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