

Direct Mail: A Brief Introduction

Direct Mail marketing can be defined as "marketing through a channel that reaches the consumer directly". The channel is usually through a mailer. Direct mail marketing is also known as "Direct Response Marketing" but there are those who refer to this as "Junk Mail". That is mainly because all of us receive so many direct mails these days that we hardly open any and as a result most of them end up as junk. And so the receiver does not end up taking the desired action that the business wants it to take. In fact these days people are receiving so many direct mails that some companies are offering them an option to opt out of receiving the mailers.

But that was not the case before. When direct mail started it was quite effective (in many countries where consumers do not receive so many mailers it still is), and so the business could stand to gain from it. But now in places such as the US, direct mails have mostly lost their effectiveness.

Channels of Direct Mail

Some popular channels of direct mail include advertising circulars, pre-approved credit cards, product catalogs, discount coupons, invitations, and many other unsolicited commercial merchandise that the consumer may not be interested in at all, or at best is indifferent about. Often companies do not send such direct mails to one and all but select groups of customers based on a geographical area, income group or social belonging. But even then the target group is rather large because the response rate is quite low.

What Made Direct Mail So Popular Once

Notwithstanding its problems, direct mail had many advantages and that is why it became so popular. To begin with, it is a 'one to one communication' and so the business can reach the customer directly. There are no noises in the system, meaning that the business can inform the customer whatever it wants him to know. Direct mail is also cheaper to deliver ad so for the same expense as television ads for example, the business can reach a far bigger number of customers.

Consumers while reading a newspaper tend to avoid looking at the advertisement insertions and when they see television, they tend to go for a drink when the commercials are running. When it comes to billboards most people tend to take just a fleeting glance as they are on the move while driving. But that is not the case with direct mail because it is sort of 'up on the face' and thus the concentration levels of the consumers are much higher. The lack of any distraction means that the receiver ca takes a decision after considering the validity of the offer and how attractive it is to him. Because of this, it has been seen that the response rate of direct mail is often higher.

But the challenge as mentioned above is to stand out from all the different mailers a person get and make him open it and read.

About the Author

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