



Going Retro

Traditional marketing tactics worth exploring in our digital world

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If you're looking for something new for your marketing mix, why not consider something ... old?

Yes, it's 2017, and yes, we live in a digital world – a world filled with artificial intelligence, social media, mobile apps and, of course, the cybersecurity threats that come with all things digital. But amid all the online channels, email marketing, webinars and data-driven campaign options there remain some old-fashioned marketing strategies and tactics still actively applied. And the reason is simple: Experienced marketers continue to employ some traditional channels because while they may not be sexy, they still produce results.

We're all inundated with marketing messages from an array of digital media, such that much of it has become white noise. People in many audience segments are more responsive to traditional, more personal outreach than they are to digital efforts. Even those who may be early adopters, who know and understand how to use even the most cutting-edge technology, often appreciate the more direct connection achieved through non-digital channels.

Retro marketing tactics making a comeback:

- Direct mail – Direct marketing overall has evolved with the growth of email marketing. But email hasn't entirely replaced traditional mail. Think back to the clutter in your mailbox 10 or 20 years ago compared to today. And now think about the clutter in your email inbox today compared to 10 years ago. Studies show that direct mail becomes less effective as clutter increases and vice versa – engagement grows as clutter declines. As traditional mail volume has decreased, your direct mail piece has less competition for attention. And ROI remains strong when direct mail is delivered to a well-targeted audience. Savvy marketers are taking advantage of today's big data and using intelligence gathered from digital sources to improve personalization and relevance of direct mail campaigns, which are keys to success.
- Business cards – Just because few people use a physical Rolodex anymore doesn't mean there is nothing to be gained from handing someone a business card. Business cards are still a very cost-effective means of putting your company logo in someone's hands, building awareness and triggering the memory of meeting the person. Personalize cards with headshots in addition to contact info to further remind the holder of the connection made.
- Branded gifts and promotional items – Even in our digital world, people love free stuff. Select gifts your audience will keep in their office or on their desk rather than trinkets that go home to the kids. Choose things they will see and use frequently, or invest in a high-quality gift they know is too nice to toss. This can make a lasting impression and keep your company top of mind when the recipient has a need you can solve in the future, which is especially important for service-oriented, transactional businesses where positive connections are critical.
- Sign spinning – Often used in consumer marketing, the concept of paying people to wear costumes or dance around to attract the attention of motorists can also be effective in B2B marketing, too. The point is to attract attention, so think of your booth at an upcoming trade event as your storefront – sign spinning will prompt some attendees to pause and may help direct them to you when many exhibitors are vying for their time.

Of course, not everything old is new again. While vinyl records have become popular again in recent years, it's unlikely we'll see the rebirth of 8-track tapes anytime soon. Just as it's not wise to jump on the latest tech-driven trend until you've evaluated its effectiveness and determined its potential value, you'll want to vet any more traditional activity. And like all marketing tactics, what



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works for one organization won't necessarily work for yours. ROI may be defined by any variety of very specific factors that are unique to each organization.

Just remember to keep an open mind, and don't simply dismiss strategies because they're "old-school." In our increasingly connected world, marketers are rediscovering value in some of these retro tactics that might give your next campaign just the *edge* you're looking for!

About the author

Jennifer Marsnik is a senior account manager with Edge Marketing. She specializes in helping clients develop and implement strategic PR and marketing plans that support their overall business goals. Jennifer is a life-long Minnesotan who tolerates the long, brutal winters only so that she can readily feed her obsession with Minnesota Twins baseball.

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