

# A Case Study

## In A Direct Mail Campaign To The Trade

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It's funny. When we speak of direct mail, we think of the consumer. Our audience could be defined demographically 18-49, earning \$35,000 and single or psycho graphically: wears jeans, enjoys hiking and reads Hemingway.

What about the trade? Retailer, buyer or distributor, they are customers too and can also be segmented for target opportunities. The trade remains an important reader, who ultimately allocates space for merchandising support and product display.

Why then are many of us not as "button down" with trade direct mail strategy and execution as we are for consumers? Certainly direct mail promoting Ralph Lauren or Jaguar is more stimulating than cafeteria equipment. Should we fail to motivate the trade through direct mail, then we have become responsible for poor communication to our customers as well. The following case study demonstrates the negative consequences of a poorly executed direct mail campaign to the trade.

We audited food chain outlets to determine:

1. Whether grocers were receiving a monthly food association newsletter, and
2. How well they displayed and encourage shoppers to read the newsletters.

What initially was a simple evaluation, turned into a myriad of problems. Why? The food company simply discharged newsletters without planning and post evaluating. Basic tenets for direct mail were forgotten:

- 1) **Outdated Mailing List.** Newsletters were sent to grocery managers who had since left. There were new chains not on the list, that should have been. Further, some outlets no longer carried the produce advertised in the newsletter.
- 2) **No Cover Letter.** No cover letter was attached explaining why the newsletter should be displayed to shoppers and giving tips on how to merchandise it.
- 3) **No Follow-Up.** A selected sample of grocers was not surveyed after mailing to determine what percentage received the newsletter and what their perceptions were. The association also failed to assess whether each outlet was receiving appropriate quantities.

### The Consequences

- Newsletters were poorly displayed. They were often hidden and inconsistently placed in various outlets.
- Grocers were not encouraging shoppers to take home the newsletter and buy products featured in it.
- There were no calls from grocers after they ran out of newsletters.

### Checklist

To improve 'sell-in' to the trade and help ensure ongoing co-operation, a Checklist and Trade Feedback Card was prepared to identify essential direct mail tenets.

The checklist was easy to fill in. Data was also accumulated to monitor changes critical to the campaign's success.

A sample of grocery outlets were then surveyed to see how well the direct mail requests were implemented. As Mystery Shoppers, we audited 35 outlets. By going into stores we found out first-hand how the program performed.

### Conclusion

The trade cannot be ignored. They can determine the success of store promotions and ultimately customer purchases. If planning, executing and follow-up are sloppy, then direct mail becomes junk mail.

Checklists, feedback cards and store audits put us in contact with, instead of overlooking, this direct mail audience ●