

marketing matters



Direct Mail Versus E-mail

BY AMY FORIS

Although e-mail marketing has its advantages, people today receive a large number of unsolicited "spam" e-mails masquerading as genuine messages. An increasing amount of spam has led to the development of strong filters, spam laws and virus concerns. So, why does direct mail—specifically, postcards—work better than e-mail?

Everyone has a mailbox—The best way to stand out in a mailbox is with a postcard, which if well-designed can immediately grab customers' attention (since there is no envelope to open or e-mail gatekeepers to bypass).

Prequalify—Take direct mail one step further and target specific neighborhoods (radius mailings). These target specific customers that are already pre-qualified and would be interested in your service. For example, if you just installed a new HVAC system, the neighbor's home may have that very same need. If you want to target the neighbors of your current customers, you simply cannot do that through e-mail. For a larger reach outside a neighborhood, you can purchase a mailing list. This allows you to drill down for information based on customer characteristics and target a wide range of available demographics based on gender, age, income, age of home or lifestyle.

Creative/personal—Direct mail has a personal feel, because it has a name on it. And if you use variable text, the postcard can be customized in many areas. E-mails have to be short, which can limit your creativity and message. More thought and effort go into sending a postcard. And when you make the prospect feel important, your response rates will be higher.

Shelf life—Direct mail has "shelf life." It can be filed, reviewed later or even shared with friends. An e-mail, like other electronic advertising, is not tangible.

If you are going to grow in today's competitive marketplace, direct mail is a good marketing plan. In addition to less competition, advertising can be personalized, which can make prospects feel important. This feeling of importance will be reflected in your response rate. 

Amy Foris is the President of Radius Connection, which helps HVACR professionals create word-of-mouth buzz through neighborhood marketing—and offers RSES Members discounts on direct-marketing campaigns. For more information, visit www.radiusconnection.com; or e-mail aforis@radiusconnection.com or call 888-829-2249.

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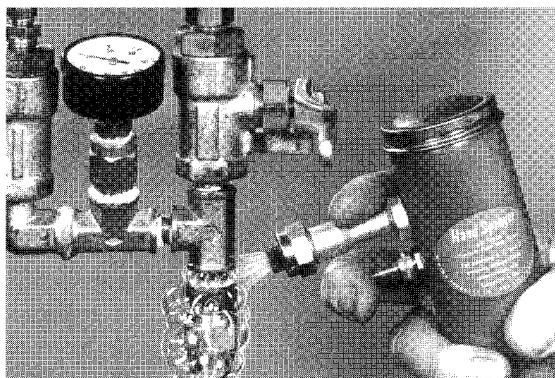
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