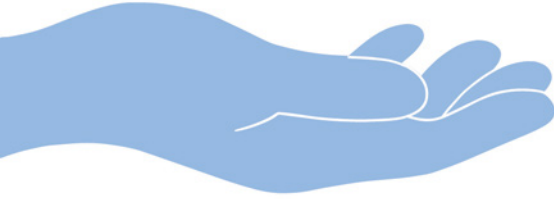


INCITE



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INCITING ACTION THROUGH MARKETING INTEGRATION



Let's ring in the New Year with some new ideas about integration. Wait – you may be asking yourself, *Hasn't marketing always been integrated?* No. It really hasn't.

In fact, it seems we've been taking the idea of integration for granted. Over the last decade, many Canadian companies have overinvested in digital channels, thereby abandoning the principles of (and the evidence for) integrated marketing.

Despite all our talk about integration, it can feel elusive – especially when the need for it has grown in scope to encompass brand, channels, data, technology, customer experience and more.

If everything, as they say, is connected, then why aren't we acting like it?

In this issue, we look at how integration has evolved in an ever-complex marketing landscape, how it's showing up in the marketplace and what that means for marketing's future.

As we renew our relationship with the physical world, we ask if we should (finally) pursue a truly integrated reality that brings the best of physical and digital together. We explore the sense and sensibility of neuromarketing and what it can teach us about multi-sensory integration. We'll also look at what greater sensory and technology integration can do for direct mail and take a deep dive into data integration with Canada Post Smartmail Marketing data partners.

Integration might not be a new concept, but as our experts will prove, the new year could be just the time to tap into the recovery, growth and resilience that come with it.

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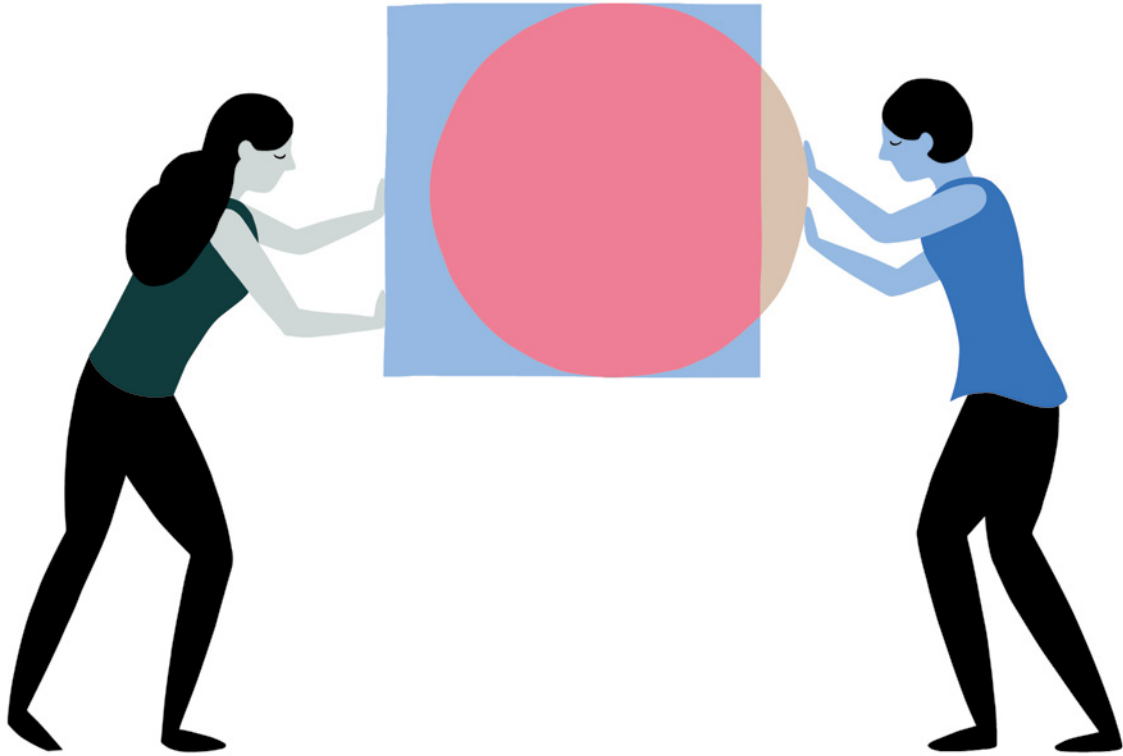
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THE INTEGRATION FACTOR

With growth at scale unsustainable, we need to turn our attention to growth through integration.

Key Takeaways

The scope of integration has moved beyond marketing communications.

Ecosystem brands represent the future of integrated growth.

Integration can unlock a lot of unrealized substance and value.

Within every decade, you'll find people writing about how the world is getting more complex.

The same holds true for marketing. Read any marketing publication from the last 40 years, and you'll run into some expert discussing the concept of integration. That's right – integration dates back to the time of parachute pants and big hair. But unlike fleeting fashion trends, integration has remained in style ever since.

Integration entered common marketing vernacular at the end of the post-Second World War economic growth era (1950s-80s). It emerged at a time that saw a boom in people, mass production and consumerism. During this era, people became wealthier via a growing middle class, and media choices blossomed. Also during this time, marketing management became a real discipline, the science of advertising and consumer psychology took hold, traditional media grew and matured, and new marketing specialties entered the mix.

It wasn't until 1989 when the term *integrated marketing communications* (IMC) was coined by the American Association of Advertising Agencies. They defined it as “a marketing strategy that recognizes the value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines, advertising, public relations, personal selling, and sales promotion, and combines them to provide clarity,

consistency, and maximum communication impact.” This definition recognized that marketing communications are more effective when holistically and strategically planned and when brand and message are coherent across channels.

Around that same time, a new era of marketing was dawning – one on the cusp of digital media transformation and the first signs of subculture, media verticalization and new media devices fragmenting mainstream audiences. Cable TV. VCRs. Computer gaming. Mobile phones. They all began to split audience attention. The 1990s saw a shift toward segment-based TV programming and marketing aimed at attracting different types of audiences, with media becoming ever more addressable, precise and personalized over the last few decades.

Fast forward to 2022. We've entered the era of connectivity. The convergence between digital and physical offers a new mixed reality of convenience, experience, precision and responsivity that has moved beyond the internet into mobile devices and daily objects that run on digital technology and data. The scale and scope of integration has moved well beyond IMC to impact the full ecosystem.

Today, we need to integrate more people, functions, messages and formats across more channels within customer journeys, ensuring data and technology work

together and that marketing and customer experience are aligned. All of this on budgets and timelines that are shorter and smaller. It can make even the best of us wish for simpler times or a magical integration button to push.

Integration may have always been in style, but getting it right for the next era of marketing isn't about being fashionable. It's about getting connected, building your brand as an ecosystem of value creation, enabling technology and data to flow, and looking toward new organizational structures that reduce silos.

GETTING CONNECTED

Connectivity is central to the Fourth Industrial Revolution we find ourselves in as the boundaries between the physical, digital and biological spheres continue to blur. Unfolding against a backdrop of global instability, ecological distress and loss of trust, this new age features a fundamental shift in how things work.

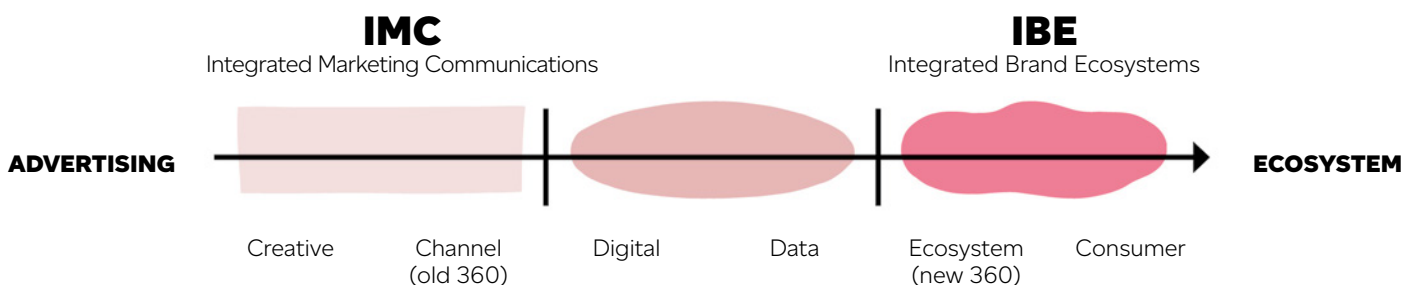
We are adapting to a new marketing paradigm while simultaneously rediscovering vital principles about what makes for effective marketing. Integration is a hot topic because it's central to this balancing act. Effective marketing relies on integration; connectivity is a function of integration.

This renewed focus on integration coincides with an emphasis on holistic planning and ecosystem management. When we

INTEGRATION EVOLUTION

The simplest meaning for integration is bringing things together. Guiding the need for integration are fragmentation, complexity and connectivity. The general evolution of marketing integration

has moved from the advertising focus of matching luggage in the 1990s and early aughts, centred on creative and channel integration, toward dynamic systems with brand meaning at the centre.



“While the 1980s were big in power and productivity, the 2020s will be big for an orientation toward sustainability and systems. As growth at scale becomes less sustainable, the response needed is growth through integration.”

talk about customer journeys, channel orchestration, data-driven and/or omni-channel marketing, automation and cookies, we’re talking about integration. And when we talk about sustainability, inclusivity, collaboration and brand ecosystems, we’re talking about the valuable interdependencies that flow from that integration.

ECOSYSTEM BRANDS

An ecosystem brand orientation recognizes the need to provide connected value in the customer’s world. Ecosystem brands use their whole ecosystem to create value and growth. This approach doesn’t adhere to traditional market share levers related to product/market fit (price, category or product). Instead, the ecosystem takes on similar roles to products and services with a focus on solution/need fit. You can think about it like world building – extending brand meaning throughout the ecosystem coherently.

Companies like Apple, LEGO, Amazon, IKEA and Disney are ecosystem brands that deliver greater brand valuation and innovation, a differentiated customer experience, more loyalty, and personalization. Each brand uses its core to address peripheral consumer needs, aiming to become one-stop shops for interrelated solutions. They use ecosystem interaction, technology and data to keep feeding knowledge about consumer needs.

In a recent WARC article, *Why the future belongs to ecosystem brands*, the authors punctuate:

“The most effective ecosystems are defined not by costs and defending of market share but by revenues and creation of new markets altogether which better satisfy real human needs. ... The most successful ones go to the next level – they become ecosystems, offering an interconnected set of services that enables users to fulfill a wide range of needs in one integrated experience.”

The approach isn’t just for big brands or tech brands, and not all companies will become ecosystem brands. Every brand will find their own way, to different degrees. One thing is for certain, however: becoming an ecosystem brand takes a different way of thinking and working.

A FUNCTION OF SILOS

Set data and technology aside. One of the biggest integration shortfalls has to do with organizational structures, processes and functional silos.

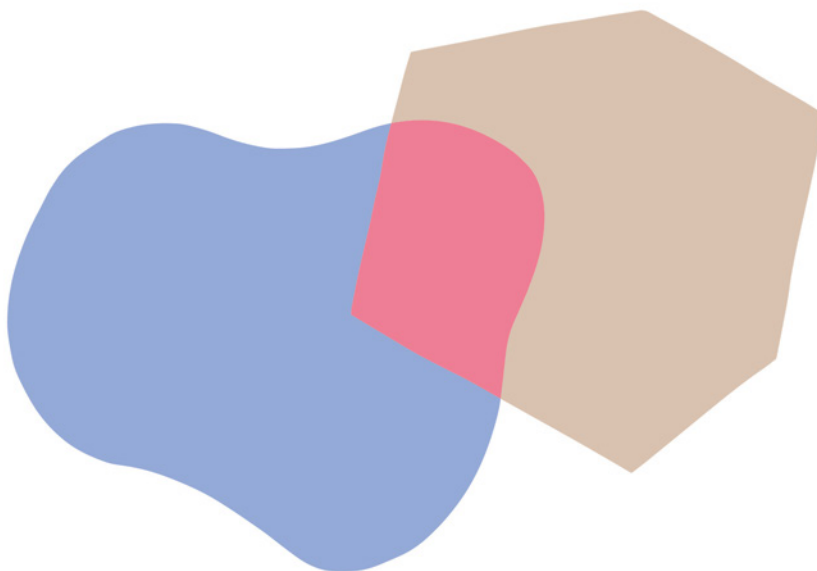
Job functions dictate the internal structures of almost every organization. And why not? It’s an efficient and controllable way to manage people and productivity. However, it is also a reactive way to deal with complexity and change. Look at job listings and titles to see the deficiencies in organizations that they hope to fill with a bum in a seat.

The problem is that silos don’t operate as part of a connected system. That creates barriers to change and adaptability. This can also create opportunity costs or introduce biases into decision making, thus opening the organization up to risk and vulnerability.

Silos also limit innovation by limiting – or eliminating – integration.

At some point, the inevitable question that cuts through the organizational silos to the heart of the problem gets asked: *Whose job is it?* While integration should be in everyone’s job description, it typically comes down to leadership and culture. Ironically, job function will play a key role in moving both organizations and people toward more holistic processes and structures that support integration.

In a connected context, the lines between technology and business strategy can’t be left to departmental myopia. Silos have a big impact on how technology and data work together (or, in many cases, don’t work together). Integrating technology starts with knowing what it needs to do. After all, technology is just an enabler.



PLUGGING IN TO APIS

In the wake of third-party data deprecation, data will further fragment and more systems will need to talk to each other. Lack of preparedness and know-how can make it difficult to rise to the occasion of new data opportunities as we say goodbye to cookies. From a marketer's perspective, with targeting still a top challenge, application programming interfaces (APIs) are critical to obtaining data that improves audience understanding, identity resolution and targeting relevance.

“The scale and scope of integration has moved well beyond IMC to impact the full ecosystem.”

Data integration requires interconnection. APIs are how software systems talk to each other. They enable the creation of custom-made integrations between existing systems. Like anything else, a unified approach to creating and using APIs serves a business better than single-use or ad hoc API integrations. The whole point is to get the components of a system to work together as one. If this is conjuring notions of the Borg from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, don't be afraid. Modern APIs no longer require full migration. It's not a matter of *assimilation*, but rather one of *interoperability*.

APIs have been changing the way data is accessed and shared. By allowing web platforms to communicate with each other

and existing business systems, APIs can cut through debilitating data silos to unlock the latent value that flows from data integration – provided they are managed with security and privacy in mind.

THE INTEGRATION FACTOR

While the 1980s were big in power and productivity, the 2020s will be big for an orientation toward sustainability and systems. As growth at scale becomes less sustainable, the response needed is growth through integration.

The benefits of integration are more substantive than mere efficiencies. Integration isn't about reducing complexity down to efficient, simple components; it's about rewiring the complexity connecting all the pieces to function better together, unlocking latent value and creating new value through ecosystems.

While we can get caught up in data and technology doing the connecting for us, don't forget about employees and customers. Removing silos and increasing collaboration are critical to creating growth through integration. The first job is to make them part of the brand ecosystem. Then you'll know what technology needs to be enabled and what data needs to be activated.

Start with that big, magical integration button you wish you had. What would you want that button to do for you? Then connect the dots to get growth through integration working for you.

need for integration are fragmentation, complexity and connectivity. The general evolution of marketing integration has moved from the advertising focus of matching luggage from the 1990s and early aughts, centred on creative and channel integration, toward dynamic systems with brand meaning at the centre. ■



INTEGRATION EVOLUTION

The simplest meaning for *integration* is bringing things together. Guiding the

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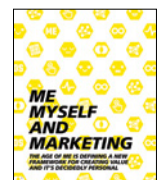
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THE INTEGRATION PLAYING FIELD

The integration playing field can be complex as marketers face fragmentation and increased diversification across audiences and markets. Understanding the different dimensions of inte-

gration impacting modern marketing is an excellent place to start when addressing strategic priorities and gaps within the brand ecosystem. How do you rate your level of integration?



BRAND INTEGRATION

Annual brand valuation and financial performance studies have shown that coherent brands significantly outperform the market. Brand and business strategies are interrelated. Brand sits at the centre of value creation, informing everything a company does and what people experience. Too often, the brand isn't integrated effectively or used operationally – viewed as only marketing. Improve impact for effort by creating more brand coherence – an outcome of integration.



FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION

Functional silos affect every aspect of marketing effectiveness. They may define expertise and focus, but they also foster special interests, a lack of collaboration and poor market coherence. The challenges associated with cross-functional integration relate as much to structure and process as they do to human nature. Strategic alignment and holistic planning are a productive place to start – follow-through is essential. Pursue purposeful collaboration.



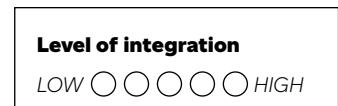
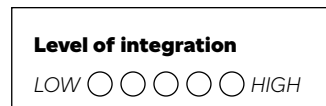
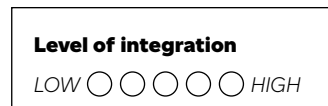
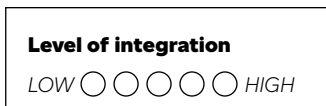
DATA INTEGRATION

Integral to creating actionable insights, data integration is a top priority for many organizations as first-party data becomes more critical to success. Taking fragmented information and pulling it together has far-reaching implications related to identity resolution, segmentation, customer experience, marketing attribution, holistic planning and econometrics. Understanding data needs across an organization is an essential step toward integration.



TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Integration is the top concern of marketers regarding technology – topping price, ease of use and features. Technology integration needs to be business driven, strategically defined and structured to work across the brand ecosystem. Whether your tech stack works or not is a function of picking the right technology to serve the needs of the business and then configuring it to create an integrated solution.



CX INTEGRATION

If you want a unified and consistent customer experience, mapping all interaction points with the brand ecosystem will help coordinate all elements. It's not just about a *better* customer experience; it's about a *more meaningful* one that enhances brand relevance and distinction. With marketing, shopping and customer service converging, an integrated customer experience has never been more critical (or costly to fix, if not addressed).



CREATIVE INTEGRATION

Far from the days of matching luggage, integrated creative is more dynamic today taking into account paid, owned and earned expression. When it comes to content, it needs to be coordinated across the customer journey and amplified in different formats, crossing the artificial borders between digital and offline media. Effective creative integration improves visibility and memorability.



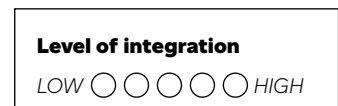
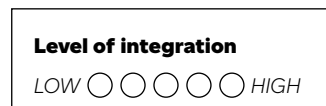
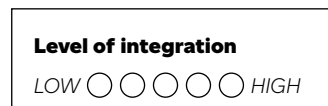
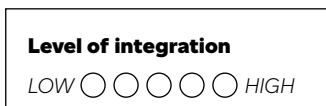
CHANNEL INTEGRATION

Integrated marketing improves the chance of relevant exposure. Multi-channel is not the same as channel integration; it's only the starting point. Effective IMC coordinates all types of marketing activities considering the full spectrum of media, audience receptivity and interaction within the customer journey. Paid, owned and earned work together, crossing digital and non-digital channels, devices and environments.



MEASUREMENT INTEGRATION

Ensure measurement is integrated top-down and bottom-up. Proving marketing's value means measurement needs to ladder up to business objectives. Tactical metrics can't be the only story as measurement needs to be integrated across customer experience, between marketing and sales and within campaigns. It should also be customer-centric. Ensuring integration in measurement also means using cross-channel attribution practices.





SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

By Diana Lucaci

*Neuromarketing shows us the true impact
of engaging the senses and how much
sense emotional connection makes
to the bottom line.*

It's a little past noon, and our toddler is ready for her nap. I'm feeling optimistic about catching up with work emails during this next hour, so we start getting her ready. Now the only thing standing between me and power productivity is Robby the Robot.

Where did I put that thing? Naps cannot happen without her favourite lovey, a light blue soft toy that's losing its shape. Time is ticking; this girl is yawning. No other lovey smells or feels like Robby. There's no fooling her.

It's fascinating to watch a person's sensory systems develop before your eyes. In the first few months, she loved following our facial expressions and preferred the smell of foods I ate during pregnancy. As she grew, she explored new objects with her hands and, more often, with her mouth. Navigating a space was tricky before depth perception, and with time she has developed good awareness of where her body is in space.

Found it. A semi-clean Robby the Robot is all we need to continue the day as planned.

SEEKING SENSORY ENGAGEMENT

When your senses are engaged, you experience the world in technicolour. You form richer memories and connect those memories with positive feelings; every human being derives joy from art, music, nature or even a good commercial.

For some, these experiences can be deeply moving. As an aside, highly sensitive people (HSP) make up about 20% of the world's population and are generally highly creative and empathetic and hold deep appreciation for beauty and nature. The brain of an HSP is wired differently, and it offers insights into how sensory information is processed. They experience stronger activation in brain regions involved in awareness and empathy. Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) research has shown that sensory processing sensitivity is an innate personality trait, associated with greater sensitivity to environmental and social stimuli.

When you understand sensory development, it becomes easier to understand your

“When your senses are engaged, you experience the world in technicolour.”

preferences in daily life. For example, today more than before, our senses crave the familiar. Emerging from a global pandemic, people are seeking engaging interactions with their favourite brands. The climate is ripe for sensory innovation after a period of feeling a sense of sensory restriction.

As a brand or agency, you want to make sure your message is resonating – starting with getting attention. The message must first be seen, then perceived as relevant, before ultimately being selected. The challenge comes when it's time to execute campaigns that get noticed as well as engage the senses, trigger an emotion and encode into memory.

Sounds like a tall order, but it can be easily broken down into achievable steps when guided by neuro-design practices.

Unlike a decade ago, today's successful brands rely on human emotion and attention data to understand their audience. Measuring what grabs an audience's attention is no longer a difficult process involving investments of \$20,000 or more and a timeline of a few weeks. It has become more affordable, accurate and accessible. After all, it's only neuroscience – not rocket science.

ENGAGING THE SENSES

Executing successful marketing campaigns means engaging the senses. Whether the medium is physical (i.e., direct mail or OOH) or digital (i.e., emails, landing pages, video or mobile), there are many ways to trigger an emotion in the moment.

In the digital space, haptics (any technology that can create an experience of touch, like your phone vibrating) intensify emotions and increase engagement and memorability. In 2018, I partnered with Immersion to understand the effect of haptics on the brain. The research analyzed brain activity when exposed to different levels of haptic technology. The results

showed that haptics make content more approachable and appealing overall. The study showed that haptics influence recognition and perception, with an 18% increase in the perception of quality for featured products, an 11% increase in brand value, and an average 40% increase in the ability to recall visuals (condition recall) compared to non-haptic scenarios.

Haptics seem to have a profound impact on how people react to digital experiences. The intensity of haptic feedback triggers a higher or lower level of motivation (how drawn you are toward something) and arousal (how emotionally intense the experience is). A high level of haptics is shown to elicit stronger responses in the brain at key moments during the ad.

Another popular method to stimulate the senses digitally is the use of sound in a more subtle way. Starting around 2019, many brands, like IKEA and Renault, have created advertisements that whisper and tingle, instead of shout. Sounds like these trigger the autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR), a feeling of deep relaxation and a pleasant tingly sensation some people experience in the scalp or upper body. Whether the crinkle of a shirt or a whisper, soothing sounds like those in ASMR videos can reduce the heart rate by about 10 to 15 beats per minute.

One popular example of a mainstream ASMR commercial is Michelob Ultra's Super Bowl ad featuring Zoë Kravitz. During the minute-long ad, she never raises her voice above a whisper, while tapping her fingernails against the bottle and pouring its contents into a glass. Integrating quiet sounds like these can create a very realistic experience in our minds, break through the loud and be especially useful when the element of touch is not present.

Physical media has a big advantage over digital in conveying product quality and value. It allows a brand to engage across the tactile, visual, olfactory and auditory

senses. When three or more senses are engaged, a brand's impact increases by as much as 70%.

The sense of smell is one of the most primitive abilities, closely connected with emotional experiences. Print media can also use scents that enhance a message and promote its memorability. For example, Liberty Mutual ran a scented print ad in the April 2019 issue of the *Chicago Sun-Times* that read, "If you're thinking about a new car, think about Liberty Mutual." On the right side of the page was a flap that contained that "new car smell." To make the print ad stand out, the brand used the trigger of the new car smell to help the reader remember to investigate automotive insurance.

"The best way to remain top of mind is to think creatively about the human being on the other end."

Incorporating different paper weights and textures is a great idea to engage the tactile sense. A thicker paper stock conveys a high-investment offer, such as a luxury item. To communicate different emotions, consider adding foil, embossing, spot varnish, cut-outs, folds or laser etching.

OPTIMIZING FOR SENSORY CONNECTION

The easiest and most influential sense to captivate is sight. Start with what your audience will see. As mentioned before, you need your message to be noticed before it can be perceived as relevant.

With a bit of objective attention data, you can identify the images, fonts, colours, words or layout that will quickly and easily enhance a key message or call to action – acting as a heuristic. The design of a digital or print piece is the first and most influential step in the success of the campaign.

In the past decade of conducting neuromarketing research, we've found five common mistakes that most marketers make:

1. Execution is too confusing or too busy.
2. Images don't match the content.
3. Colours distract from the intended customer action.
4. Images of people are not used properly and distract from the message.
5. Layout is counterintuitive for the purpose of the piece.

By training our AI system with attention data from published computer vision academic literature and a vast attention database, we built a tool that can quickly identify what gets people's attention. Our tool, trueSCAN – which helps optimize communications, email, print, web, OOH and much more – can quickly identify what gets attention. Knowing what is seen first gives the brand an opportunity to make changes before the piece of communication is in market. For example, when revamping their email strategy, MD Financial went from a text-heavy design to a well-organized and easy-to-understand one. When tested with trueSCAN, the results showed an opportunity to reduce content and allow more white space. A quick change in the early design stages helped this email communication get four times the regular click-through rates.

When it comes to optimizing communications for attention, a brand's objective should be three-fold:

1. Grab attention within one second.
2. Have attention fixated on a desired message or call to action.
3. Maintain interest for the duration of the user experience.

Connecting with your audience at an emotional level requires a deeper understanding and knowledge about how to engage their senses. Conversion to a call to action is important; however, so

are brand awareness, memorability and loyalty. The senses can deliver more of everything. The best way to remain top of mind is to think creatively about the human being on the other end – starting with what they will see. ■

Neuromarketing scientist **Diana Lucaci** is co-founder and CEO of True Impact, former chair of the Neuromarketing Science and Business Association, committee member of the Standards Council of Canada and winner of the Best in Class research award from the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association.



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JOY MEETS WORLD

By Amanda O'Donovan

We're finding pleasure in the physical world again. But reuniting our digital and physical selves will take an integrated mindset.

At some point in the pandemic, I went down to the basement and blew the dust off a collection of letters dating back to the person formerly known as me. Reading them took me away from habitual screen time and connected me with a narrative that revealed how I'd travelled from past to present. Those letters helped ground me during the most significant and startling global event of my lifetime. Letters – from my parents, distant boyfriends, the man I married, my sister adventuring abroad – reminded me of the importance of real people in a world that I can see, touch, smell, celebrate and value. They were redolent of the joy to be found in simple pleasures and in the communities that have animated me.

In a Forbes article, “One Year Later: 8 Reflections From the Pandemic,” Helen Dwight describes us as fundamentally social creatures, relying on each other for support, motivation and appreciation. The pandemic has taught us to be mindful of the moment, engaging all the senses. That’s why experiences matter.

Meanwhile, conversation circled the desire to *return to normal*. While it’s undeniably wise to learn from the past, it doesn’t make sense to me to build a future that looks too much like the before times. Instead, let’s match this moment in history with a more mindful and balanced response. As we look up from our screens and come back to those moments we can touch with all our senses, let’s edit the story. A hybrid mindset gives us delicious opportunities to integrate all sides of our divides into a more rewarding whole.

CONNECTIVITY

Much has been written about the speed of digital transformation during lockdown. We live, work, shop and dine differently now. The pandemic also reminded me of how much I crave the punctuation of real-life encounters and experiences. As vaccination programs reconnected us with the world, those material moments became priorities. We found pleasure, excitement, community and solace in physical expressions of who we are – and we baked these delights back into our lives.

During my first post-lockdown visit to a clothing store, I basked in the swish of hangers, the feel of fabric and the excitement of trying on something I wouldn’t have to pack up and return if it didn’t fit. Carefully curated clothing stories made the supremely Instagrammable store a mini work of art. I felt the same excitement at Toronto’s Stackt Market, an experience that’s successfully combined community, entertainment, hospitality and retail in the largest container market of its kind.

“A hybrid mindset gives us delicious opportunities to integrate all sides of our divides into a more rewarding whole.”

As our patios, restaurants and main streets reopened, we discovered the true meaning of our tangible connections. There’s no substitute for being around a table – picking up on the nuances, exchanging glances, bouncing ideas, laughing till we cry. The equivalent would be exhausting by text.

RECIPROCITY

Smart brands started rebalancing early. Listening with all ears during lockdowns, they learned from online and offline behaviours, integrating their best lessons into experiences that reflected the needs expressed by their customers. Customers, in turn, have reciprocated by sharing their brand discoveries and positive thoughts with their communities.

Consider the fashion industry. With concerns about overproduction, some brands have taken matters into their own hands. Digital dialogues with customers and concerns about wasted resources have led them to counter fast fashion with on-demand production. It’s a case of listening to what’s needed.

Vincero watches focuses on a small-batch manufacturing process that balances value with quality. Toronto jewellery designer Michelle Ross uses social media to determine international customer preferences, avoiding guesswork and overproduction.

ALOHAS’s on-demand model means *“the brand holds off on production until customers have placed their orders, providing valuable insights that indirectly yet precisely inform production teams of what models people really want.”*

Conversely, brands are also turning to exceptional in-store retail experiences to shape AR and enhance shopper journeys online, creating more fulfilling digital encounters that replace the traditional product squares.

New York’s thematic toy store CAMP concentrates on family experiences in real life. Quick to react to the changing circumstances of the pandemic, CAMP’s virtual birthday parties reached 10,000 kids around the world and eventually attracted sponsorship dollars to pay for the parties.

In an era when reciprocity has been distilled to an exchange of likes on social media (like my post and I’ll feel obliged to like yours), it’s good to see consumers recast as collaborators and refreshing to encounter business models that revolve around people rather than channels or products.

CIRCULARITY

The past couple of years have forced us to examine our relationship with cause and effect. What goes around comes around. We’ve become more conscious of our physical world and the real impact we have on it. Questioning a take-make-dispose approach, individuals and corporations are re-examining their ecosystems and addressing resource cycles to create a more sustainable future.

As we regain consciousness, there’s greater acknowledgement that we can’t return to business as usual. So, how do we redesign our world and the way we work, live, socialize and travel?

IKEA has committed to becoming 100% circular by 2030. Focusing on turning waste and surplus into a resource, they are testing “*more circular solutions such as furniture leasing, sell-back schemes and helping customers repair, reuse and recycle old furniture or give it a second life through reselling.*”

In their 2019 financial year, IKEA successfully gave 47 million products a second life, 38 million products were resold through the As-Is specialty shop and more than nine million products were repacked and returned to the shelf. A joyful example of real-world transformation.

“It’s perfectly possible for our physical and digital worlds to borrow from each other, merging skills and pairing strengths.”

COMMUNITY

We need to talk about *Ted Lasso*. Apart from the online necessities of life and the streaming service that brought the show into our homes, this runaway success of a series from Apple TV+ is an affirmation of hopeful, happy connections in the real world. From the pub to the pitch, from the locker room to the laneways of London, *Ted Lasso*’s cast of imperfect humans reminds us of what it means to be part of a community that cares.

When our real world shrank, we became hyper-focused on our immediate vicinity. We rediscovered the importance of community. Seeing our surroundings through new eyes presented an opportunity to redesign our collective responsibility and contribute more meaningfully to the fabric of the microcosm we call home. Our house, our street, our neighbourhood, our city, our province, our country. We’ve found comfort in the everyday, in the familiar, in those closest to us.

TANGIBILITY

In the summer of 2021, my husband and I travelled across provincial borders – rediscovering the sheer delight of a road trip instead of reading about it in a travel blog. It opened my mind to creative and

soul-filling experiences that I’d missed on the digital side of the divide. Some experiences just get lost in translation when you try to replicate them digitally.

We were no longer passively falling down the rabbit hole of a feed that had been curated for us. We connected with the story of Irish immigrants at the quarantine station on Grosse Île. We overheard unscripted conversations between gardeners tending to the Montreal Botanical Garden. We experienced first-hand the magnificence of glacial valleys in the Hautes-Gorges. And we were viscerally reminded exactly why Old Québec is a UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

and leads me to think that now’s the time to get our virtual and physical selves working together. In the race to digital transformation, many companies have landed in a space that’s not very thoughtful. To redress the balance, we need to integrate our experiences, infusing them with human factors and authentic meaning. It’s perfectly possible for our physical and digital worlds to borrow from each other, merging skills and pairing strengths. If this is to be our defining moment, let’s make it one that’s worth writing home about. ■

Amanda O’Donovan is a freelance business writer and content specialist with a background in marketing and sales. Her experience spans many industries. From editorial content to white papers, Amanda’s writing sparks emotional connections, bringing clarity, humanity and sincerity to business communications: info@amandaodonovan.com

That summer, Ontario peaches and wild blueberries, raspberries and strawberries from the Île d’Orléans had never tasted so good. Celebrity chefs have long struggled to connect us with the source of our food – urging us to see beyond the takeout containers and plastic wrap to make seasonally educated choices. It took a global pandemic to bring the point home. While you can like the social media post of my delicious breakfast, you’re only experiencing it in one dimension. You’re missing the aroma, the texture and the sheer joy of that first bite. Community supported agriculture programs, farm-to-table restaurants and garden-to-kitchen home cooking have all heightened the connection to provenance, while supply-chain disruption has alerted us to the dangers of overconsumption, exotic imports and the fragile nature of our food networks that rely so heavily on technology.

OPPORTUNITY

I was reminded recently that the brain functions best when all its parts are performing together. When our impulsive reptilian brain dominates, the reasonable frontal lobes have a hard time keeping a lid on everything. It’s a positive collaboration that extends to so many aspects of life

CASE STUDY

To re-engage current customers, Altitude Sports turns to the power of catalogues to enhance brand affinity and improve purchase frequency.

ALTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

Montreal-based Altitude Sports is a leading online retailer of high-end technical apparel, outerwear, footwear and gear. From the city streets to the wilds, its products meet the fashion demands of its urban customers and stand up to the elements of Canada's extreme weather.

With more than 90,000 products from over 400 Canadian and global brands, the company has been growing quickly since 2011, when it decided to focus its energy on ecommerce.

Just as its product line changes with seasonal and fashion trends, its customer retention strategy has also evolved in the increasingly competitive direct-to-consumer retail market.

CHALLENGE

In 2019, Altitude Sports closed its last brick-and-mortar store and transformed into a pure-play ecommerce retailer. At that time, the company was using only online marketing communication channels to achieve its customer acquisition and retention goals. Now faced with a future without a physical store presence to entice shopper exploration or create a memorable environment for brand experience, the lifestyle brand needed a new approach to keep the brand at peak performance in a saturated category.

Company executives knew the loss of a physical presence would alter its customers' psychology of shopping and compromise two fundamental growth principles – physical and mental availability. With eyes on optimizing its channel strategy, Altitude Sports began experimenting with mini-catalogues to fill the gap and enhance customer experience.



RELEVANCE

There isn't a more relevant example of direct mail effectiveness than the catalogue. It's the perfect complement to digital content, ecommerce and physical stores.

Look books, style guides, wish books and "mag-alogues" differentiate themselves in oversaturated digital spaces, attracting attention and turning digital discovery into exploration. Especially when embraced by direct-to-consumer brands with no physical footprint, catalogues bring brand and conversion into perfect harmony by providing an emotional and physical primer for brand response.

Integrating catalogues into retention channels – especially when based on segmentation – showcases how they aren't just for acquisition but can also keep people engaged and increase customer value.

As people have less and less time to go to physical stores to browse and discover, catalogues have the power to create highly visual and engaging marketing.

INCITING ACTION

Three years ago, Altitude Sports began experimenting with mini-catalogues to optimize the effectiveness of its customer retention strategy.

Making the most of the storytelling possibilities and creative space offered by catalogues, the company used bold visuals and compelling product descriptions to capture customers' attention. It also coupled each standout mini-catalogue with a specific targeting strategy. For example, in the lead-up to the critical 2018 Black Friday – Cyber Monday period, Altitude Sports sent mini-catalogues to



160,000 select customers, a targeted list that included clients who did not purchase 120 days beforehand.

While the company mainly uses email marketing to speak to its frequently purchasing customers, it integrates the physical component of mailed catalogues when working to retain less frequent customers by encouraging repeat purchases.

RESULTS

For the 2018 Black Friday – Cyber Monday period, the mini-catalogues combined with segmented targeting yielded the results Altitude Sports had hoped for – a 4.2% reactivation rate within 30 days after the customer received the mini-catalogue.

Since the online-only pivot, the retailer has seen on average 30-35% annual growth,

including an astounding 80-85% growth between April and December 2020. Catalogues have been, and continue to be, a key part of that effort.

“It’s not just about a discount. The seasonal catalogues are a reminder that it’s time to order from us. They help keep us top of mind with customers ready to purchase. It helps us reactivate clients,” says Co-CEO Maxime Dubois, who calls the reactivation rate *“very satisfying.”*

The success also led to the brand further embracing the value of physical media to enhance presence in the home and overall brand experience. In addition to mini-catalogues, Altitude Sports now produces a high-end coffee table magazine twice a year, in the spring and the fall, for its high-value customers. The share-of-heart

strategy is all about encouraging customers to better know the Altitude Sports story and reinforcing brand affinity.

“Most of our clients come to the site with something in mind,” Dubois says. *“But with the magazine they can discover new products, brands and trends. We don’t show prices. It’s different from a shopping perspective – it’s a discovery perspective.”*

Dubois adds that the magazine – which is made from 100% recycled paper – is also a great opportunity to tell the stories of the trips the company’s teams take to learn more about the brands it carries, to places like Switzerland, Sweden, South Korea and the Rockies.

Case Study Debrief

BRAND Altitude Sports

INDUSTRY Retail

INCITING ACTION

Altitude Sports used mini-catalogues as part of its customer retention strategy in order to keep the brand top of mind and cut through competitive noise.

RESULTS

Integrating catalogues into retention efforts using segmentation-based targeting resulted in a 4.2% reactivation rate.

CONVERSION FUNNEL

Dots indicate where direct mail was used to incite action.



DATA SOURCES

First-party data

MEDIA FORMATS

Catalogue

ACTIVATION PILLARS

- Physicality
- Data
- Connectivity

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- › Segmentation helps brands optimize targeting and channel effectiveness.
- › Catalogues complement digital content, ecommerce.
- › Physical media enhances brand value by maintaining physical connection and brand intimacy.
- › Digital-only sales doesn’t equal a digital-only marketing communications approach.

“If you’re only putting your money into one channel, you’re missing an opportunity. When looking at customer retention, people who know you and your brand react really well when you send them something special through the mail.”

– Maxime Dubois, Co-chief Executive Officer, Altitude Sports

CASE STORIES

A collection of global work from across industries showcasing how modern marketers are integrating direct mail media with other channels, sensory experiences and technology.

Get inspired! >>
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direct mail cases from
our digital archive.



A NEW SPIN ON SERVICE

Campaign drives experience, inspires action from BMW owners.

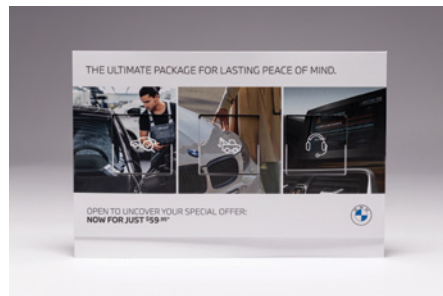
Every new BMW comes with No-Charge Scheduled Maintenance, a program that covers maintenance needs like oil changes, filter replacements, brake fluid checks, etc. for up to four years or 80,000 kilometres. When it expires, BMW retailers hope to continue their service relationship with owners.

To that end, BMW Aftersales and Richmond Day used a personalized direct mail offer to target 30,000 owners across Canada whose no-charge coverage had expired or was expiring soon, and who hadn't had a service visit for several months.

The front cover featured a triple-spinner mechanism with three die-cut windows. When the recipients opened the mailer, the cut-outs would rotate, each revealing a different highlight of the offer. The interactive nature enticed the recipient to open it, as did featuring the special price in bold lettering on the front alongside a call to action to look inside for more details.

It's sometimes assumed that BMW service is more expensive than it actually is, so it was important to feature the price front and centre. This demonstrated the value available even after the customer's no-charge coverage had expired. At the same time, the premium nature of the piece and its high-quality components mirrored the BMW experience.

The direct mail also featured a scannable QR code that could be used to instantly book the recipient's next service appointment online.



COMPANY: BMW Canada | PRODUCT: Aftersales service | COUNTRY: Canada | AGENCY: Richmond Day | AGENCY TEAM: Creative Director & Art Director: Kathryn Cucullo | Copywriter: Dave Karrel | Account Director: Sandro Liburdi | Account Manager: Marco Cianfagna
PRODUCTION: Information Packaging Inc.

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Interactive storybook sprinkles magic on customer experience.

It's a tale as old as time for a lot of B2B companies – customer communications so stuffed with “corporate-speak,” they lose any value. Salesforce, however, wanted to turn the page on that idea with a direct mail campaign that crafted a fairy tale ending for businesses.

Looking to explain how their CRM service helps businesses grow, Salesforce created *A Tale of Growth*, a slipcovered storybook that takes customers on a richly illustrated journey on how to find, win and keep clients.

Escorted across the pages by a menagerie of woodland creatures, customers play the role of the book's hero facing the challenges and triumphs of running a business. Combining relevant customer success stories with tactile touch-and-feel elements, this interactive storybook engaged the audience, enlivened their sensory experience and gave them a sense of their growth journey with Salesforce.

While each page harkens back to childhood, the book also drives home grown-up messages, especially when the look and feel is integrated across digital channels.

This direct mail piece delivered on its promise by increasing interest and consideration among recipients and opening up conversations that led to new partnerships. The campaign was so successful in Canada, it was adapted for U.S. audiences shortly after going to market. By all accounts, it was quite a storybook ending.



COMPANY: Salesforce Canada | PRODUCT: CRM platform | COUNTRY: Canada | COMPANY TEAM: Campaign Manager: Lisa Soares | Product & Customer Marketing Manager: Danielle Elliott | AGENCY: Pixel Dreams | AGENCY TEAM: Creative Director & Editor: Lannie Le | Art Director: Trevor Landon | Designer: Lily Le | Account Director: Khalid Mokhtarzada | Account Manager: Sarah Eskandarpour | PRODUCTION: Information Packaging Inc.

TICKET TO RIDE

Welcome kit gets new customers rolling in to the community.

You never ride alone with Peloton. The fitness brand built its reputation on a supportive, competitive community of users and instructors. Everything from its high-tech equipment to its social media presence drives physical and digital connection with the brand. Through classes, competitions and custom groups, the company finds every way possible to bring together its community of celebrities, influencers, pro athletes and everyday riders.

In order to be successful, however, that integration needs to start immediately after the purchase. Its differentiator is its brand intimacy, a delicate interplay between the privacy of the home workout and the public nature of its celebrated community energy. Every aspect of the brand's CX, including the product, relies on this physical-digital connection.

To introduce its newest customers to the community and enhance the anticipation of joining it, Peloton developed a physical welcome kit. Arriving ahead of bike delivery, the *Your Sweat Starts Now* kit is a sleeved box that contains postcards exploring the various Peloton membership benefits. Consider it an instruction manual for how to successfully integrate into the community, with introductions to social media posting, achievements, classes and even the music they'll be sweating to.

The kit also included a QR code that linked customers to a website where they could redeem their code for a complementary piece of gear. It's a motivating way to get customers rolling.



COMPANY: Peloton Canada | PRODUCT: Exercise bike | COUNTRY: Canada

SKY'S THE LIMIT

Competitive edge takes flight thanks to desktop drone delivery.

Options trading is a complicated process. Fund managers are often constrained by inflexible contracts and transaction requirements, and also exposed to high levels of risk during the clearing and settlement period. So ASX created FlexClear, a new options-clearing service that provides fund managers with greater security and control, giving them the freedom to trade their way.

Tapping into the hyper-competitive nature of fund managers, ASX targeted the top 50 dealers in Australia. Each dealer was sent a remote-control drone, dramatizing the control they could regain with FlexClear. The direct mail contained a product flyer that doubled as a landing platform, so recipients could compete with colleagues. Additionally, ASX incentivized a refer-a-colleague promotion to spread the word.

The ASX sales team planned to follow up with calls, but this competitive group beat them to it with a 50% response rate. The company also had 215 unique page visits to its website, showing the refer-a-colleague plan worked well, with 96% of those visitors entering the competition. With 208 competition entries, the company increased its database by 400%. Integrating physical media, technology and participation engaged this high-value audience and quickly amplified the impact of the direct mail piece, helping the new offering take flight.



COMPANY: Australian Securities Exchange | PRODUCT: FlexClear | COUNTRY: Australia
 AGENCY: Mercer Bell, Sydney | AGENCY TEAM: Executive Creative Director: David Bell
 Copywriter: Liz Kain | Senior Art Director: Mike Nikotin | Production Studio Manager: Gene Stepleton | Senior Production Manager: Lex Tully | Group Account Director: Roger Hayes
 Account Director: Joanne Whitney | Strategy: Julie Frederick | Social Media Strategy: Elliot Steed

UNAPPETIZING DETAILS

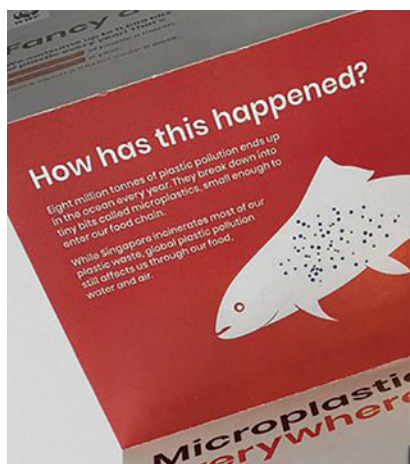
Integrated campaign mobilizes globe against diet of plastic waste.

The facts are tough to swallow. Plastic pollution is an environmental catastrophe in real time, yet it feels both too big and too small for people to understand. The only way to address the issue is by creating a globally binding treaty, and the only way to do that is to mobilize people to lobby world governments.

By integrating digital and physical media, WWF served up the issue to millions around the globe in surprisingly unappetizing detail. The campaign used household objects to highlight the amount of plastic people ingest via food, water and air. Its creative leaned on WWF research showing that humans, on average, consume about 100,000 microplastics a year – that’s a credit card’s worth a week or a coat hanger a month.

Integrating direct mail with a website, yourplasticdiet.org, the creative provided clarity on the issue while allowing people to measure their plastic intake based on their individual diet, as well as use the study’s findings to support arguments in lobbying their governments.

In the single biggest public action in WWF history, the campaign earned 5.2 billion media impressions and 1.6 million public pledges to take action from individuals in 80 countries. With that kind of public pressure, the organization hopes to convince half of the UN’s members to commit to a globally binding plastic treaty. Only then will the issue be cleaned off our plates – permanently.



COMPANY: World Wildlife Fund | PRODUCT: Awareness | COUNTRY: Singapore | AGENCY: Grey Malaysia | AGENCY TEAM: Chief Creative Officer: Graham Drew | Creative Director: Heng Thang Wei | Art Directors: Ralve Khor, Kevin Wong | Copywriter: Selva Genapathy

NOW THAT MAKES SCENTS

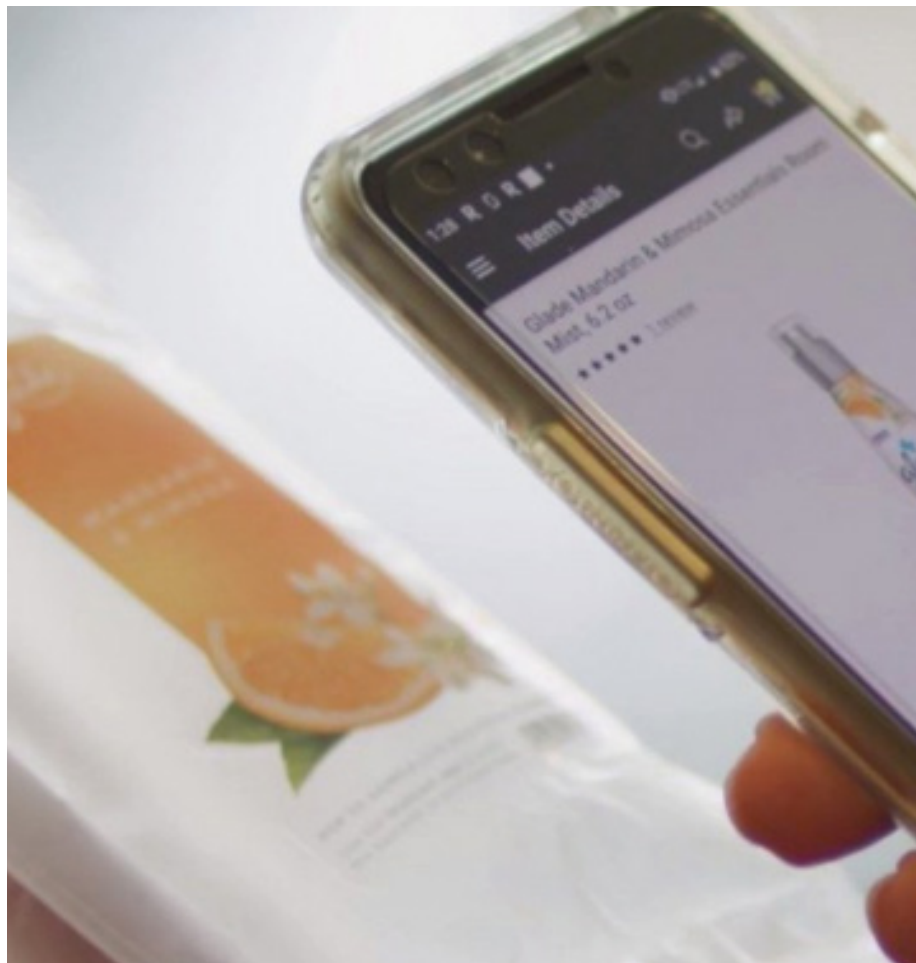
Inflated innovation brings customer sampling home.

SC Johnson-owned Glade wanted more people to try out its home air freshener. But with the rise of online shopping, fewer consumers are picking up free samples or attending product demonstrations in physical stores. They needed a plan that made sense for scents.

Teaming up with Walmart, Glade took the air-filled packing pillows in delivery boxes of online purchases and filled them with Glade home air freshener. When consumers unpacked their Walmart deliveries and popped the pillows, they got a whiff of Glade's spring fragrance before being offered the opportunity to purchase the scent via a QR code.

As Walmart's air-filled pillows need to be popped prior to recycling, they also guaranteed an intimate in-home moment with the product and brought online shoppers one step closer to conversion. By integrating a direct mail sampling into a partner's order fulfillment, Glade found a way to surprise and delight potential customers.

The activation generated an 83% increase in sales of Glade's home fragrances on walmart.com during its first week, as well as more than 11 million impressions in the first month. Ah, the sweet smell of success.



COMPANY: SC Johnson | PRODUCT: Glade | COUNTRY: United States | AGENCY: Ogilvy Chicago
AGENCY TEAM: Chief Creative Officer: Joe Sciarrotta | Group Creative Directors: Inger Tanderup,
Donna Charlton-Perrin | Creative Directors: Jin Yoo, Gloria Dusenberry | Production Artist:
Henry Purdey | Group Strategy Director: Anca Rhone

DOWN THE DRAIN

Holiday greetings help clients wash away a miserable year.

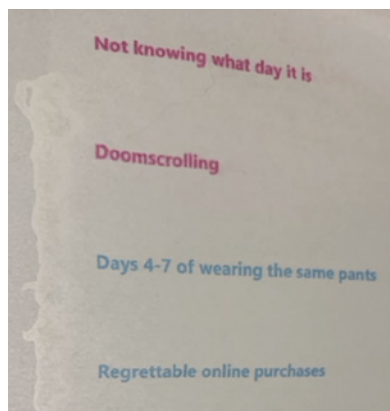
As the year's end approached, Truform Media knew its clients felt anything but festive. So instead of trying to distract from a dreadful year, the agency helped people express their joy at putting the year behind them – one hand wash at a time.

The company's annual holiday direct mail piece featured custom-printed dissolving soap sheets, each one with a nod to a different mundane misery from the year, such as marathon Zoom meetings, DIY haircuts and perpetual pivoting. Just choose a sheet, add water to lather up and watch last year's troubles wash down the drain.

In combination with the physical piece, the company developed a video to be shared on social media. This extended campaign reach to 10 times its originally intended audience, turning client engagement into agency promotion.

By capturing contextual relevance and integrating a unique sensory experience into direct mail, the company made the seemingly simple act of hand washing a symbolic – and therapeutic – moment.

Additionally, the new printing method developed by the company and its printing partner opened up a new channel for those same clients to engage their customers in the (hopefully better) years to come.



COMPANY: Truform Media Group | PRODUCT: Marketing | COUNTRY: United States
AGENCY: Truform Media Group | AGENCY TEAM: Co-creative Directors: Eric Belanger, Kathleen Honey | Group Account: Sam Pollock

CHECK THIS OUT

Self-checkout technology shrinks down to stand out.

Fujitsu feels its self-checkout kiosks represent a significant leap forward for service technology. However, it also knows its tech comes with a substantial price tag. The challenge was to convince executives who had already invested in other tech to switch.

To get in front of key potential clients, Fujitsu developed a co-branded interactive direct mail piece, personalized to the targeted organization. Designed to mimic the stress-free Fujitsu self-checkout experience, the piece used a choose-your-own-adventure-style narrative structure to walk potential clients through the process and features.

The integration of digital and physical media uniquely recreated the user experience of the product in miniature. Opening the box revealed a stylized self-checkout kiosk, complete with a seven-inch video display and a number of miniatures personalized to the recipient's company. In the case of Lowe's, for example, the mailing incorporated a tiny box of screws, tiny credit card and faux receipt with the Fujitsu rep's contact information. Each of these items contained a magnetic switch. Moving these items around the box triggered unique video messages corresponding to the actions.

Seeking to position businesses for the touchless world ahead, this unique solution allowed potential clients to check out the checkouts in a whole new way.



COMPANY: Fujitsu North America | PRODUCT: Self-checkout kiosks | COUNTRY: Canada/United States | AGENCY: UviaUs | AGENCY TEAM Design Director: Zach Shomler | Print Production Specialist: Anastasia Watson | Director of Client Success: Cody Downes | Founder & Chief Storyteller: Jaycen Thorgeirson | Chief Experience Officer: Ethan Bynoe

JINGLE ALL THE WAY

Dialing up delight and tuning into personalization to bring home the holidays.

As the holiday season approaches, SiriusXM treats existing subscribers to special offers, encouraging them to buy a second radio for another vehicle, home, cottage, boat or RV.

Following monthly emails, their year-end campaign adds opportunities to reach subscribers over two months, including Black Friday, Cyber Monday and the holidays. Typically, to drive incremental sales, emails and a direct mail package are used with social media in a support role.

Despite year-on-year successes with this approach, offer uptake had declined to about one-third of its peak. SiriusXM wanted to reverse that trend by bringing a more customer-centric and appreciative tone to the offer. The solution was just as fun as it was effective. Dialing up delight and tuning into personalization, the direct mail piece, shaped like a present with a personalized gift tag, anchored an integrated approach.

The multi-touch campaign used a digital mix of display and social media, allowing for additional touchpoints, including digital retargeting. The direct mail package got the offer right into subscriber hands.

Turning up the volume, the goal for 2019 was to activate approximately 12,000 radios. Meeting this aggressive target, radio activations increased by more than five per cent. The direct mail take rate was more than double that of the email and 120% higher than the previous year. While driving significant radio purchases, the subscriber offers also became a symbol of customer appreciation.

Results worth broadcasting!



UNBOX AN INCREDIBLE OFFER.
GET IT ON TIME—ON US.

COMPANY: SiriusXM Canada | PRODUCTS: Satellite radio | COUNTRY: Canada | AGENCY: Junction59
 AGENCY TEAM: Senior Account Supervisor: Alison McDougall | Account Executive: Julia Cairavella
 Production Director: Ellie Lee | Executive Creative Director: Curtis Wolowich | Creative Director:
 Stephen Loveless | Sr. Copywriter: Safiya Kamani | Director of Digital Strategy and Production:
 Scott Cooper

TRULY THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Dell puts naked laptop to the transcontinental test.

They did everything except mark the package “*handle without care.*”

Boasting a laptop built for the toughest environments, Dell set out to prove its Latitude Rugged Laptop lived up to the name by shipping the machine from New York to the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation in California, an organization known for operating in extreme environments.

There was just one catch.

The naked laptop was adorned with only a postage sticker – no box, no bubble wrap, no packaging of any kind – and set off on a journey that included shipping depots, trucks, airports and human handlers in New York; New Jersey; Kentucky; and California

The machine arrived in perfect working order.

Dell also leveraged that journey in a 60-second web spot titled “*No box. Just rugged.*” to highlight the, shall we say, more extreme aspects of the trip. The video, set to a rock soundtrack, informed customers that the laptop “*was handled without care and arrived without a scratch.*”

It was a clever way for the tech giant to leverage the product as the media piece in order to demonstrate (in very stark terms) the credibility of its value proposition, as well as use direct mail to generate earned media along the way.

Truly, it was a kind of literal outside-the-box thinking that got results.



COMPANY: Dell | PRODUCT: Laptop | COUNTRY: United States | AGENCY: Y&R New York
AGENCY TEAM: Chief Creative Officer North America: Leslie Sims | Executive Creative Director North America: Joao Coutinho | Global Executive Creative Director Dell: Christian Carl
Copywriter: Lindsay Dyer | Art Director: Caitlin Hickey | Head of Integrated Production: Greg Lotus | Executive Producer: Bobby Jacques | Senior Producer: Jessica Hazelkorn | Director of Business Affairs Content Production: Stacy Kallan



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NAVIGATING YOUR CUSTOMER'S WORLD

By Tom Goodwin

Rediscovering marketing as a way for companies to invest in customer creation.

Peter Drucker once wrote that “the purpose of business is to create a customer.” What amazes me is how few companies think – let alone operate – this way.

Most company structures are oriented entirely around themselves, turning their backs on consumers, looking to the past more than the future. Typically, only marketing represents the voice, opinions and needs of the consumer, while also serving as the eyes on how tastes, needs and technology will evolve in the future. Despite the essential nature of marketing, less than 0.5% of all Fortune 1000 company board members and directors have historically been active marketers. Companies instinctively think of many elements only in terms of their cost – from marketing to customer service, packaging and website development. Few see marketing as an investment to create and inspire.

When we look to the contemporary companies that have grown the fastest, become the most valuable and been the most widely admired, we think of businesses like Allbirds, Away, Peloton, Glossier, Warby Parker and Casper. While these companies are often celebrated as “tech” companies or disruptive “direct-to-consumer” brands, they also have something else in common. These companies were built from scratch, with best-in-class marketing technology at their core, offering a simple array of rather unremarkable products branded in a modern way. These brands have removed every possible barrier to purchase, delighted customers with brilliant customer service and offered a slick all-around experience across all marketing touchpoints.

Large, traditional company structures are complex. Their workflows are messy; they manage an array of agencies. Coordination is hard. Even a simple task like unsubscribing a user may take four days and involve a swivel chair process, with IT systems and databases that don’t talk to each other. Reporting is hard; data is fragmented; systems don’t connect.

Here are a few ideas on how companies can rethink their work for the future and create a seamless marketing experience that attracts, converts and delights customers.

“We can no longer hope to compete offering experiences that are good enough.”

RETHINK VISION

Marketing needs to become more ambitious. We can no longer hope to compete offering experiences that are *good enough*. We can’t simply use logos and the same font to create campaigns that seem to match. We need to recognize the need for marketing departments aiming for more.

RETHINK STRUCTURE

What used to be hard is now easy. Ecommerce websites can be developed in days; media can be bought more easily than ever; targeting can be aided by algorithms. A modern tech stack can increase speed of delivery and efficiency and be automated. This creates a remarkable opportunity to rethink departments and agency relationships and create a far more nimble and simple structure.

RETHINK TALENT

As marketing and technology have become more complex, we’ve sought comfort in specialists. Yet, as software to enable marketing becomes simpler, we may need to shift in favour of generalists who can both accomplish a greater variety of tasks and oversee strategies more holistically. Expertise will always be vital, but it doesn’t need to default to a full-time staffed role.

RETHINK DATA STRATEGY

Data should become the core nervous system of your marketing campaigns. Great thought needs to go into the reasons you need data, the decisions you make from it and who can access it, as well as what systems and governance can best deliver this.

RETHINK CULTURE

Integration is about process, protocol, structure, technology and, above all, culture. Tight-knit teams working toward clear,

inspiring goals with an attitude of curiosity and optimism will always outperform much larger teams of people with more traditional expectations of work.

RETHINK IDEAS

Bold, ideas-led campaigns are easy to orchestrate around. A big idea can simplify decisions about what to do, where to do it and what not to do, and act as the glue to keep it all together and allow consumers to make sense of it all.

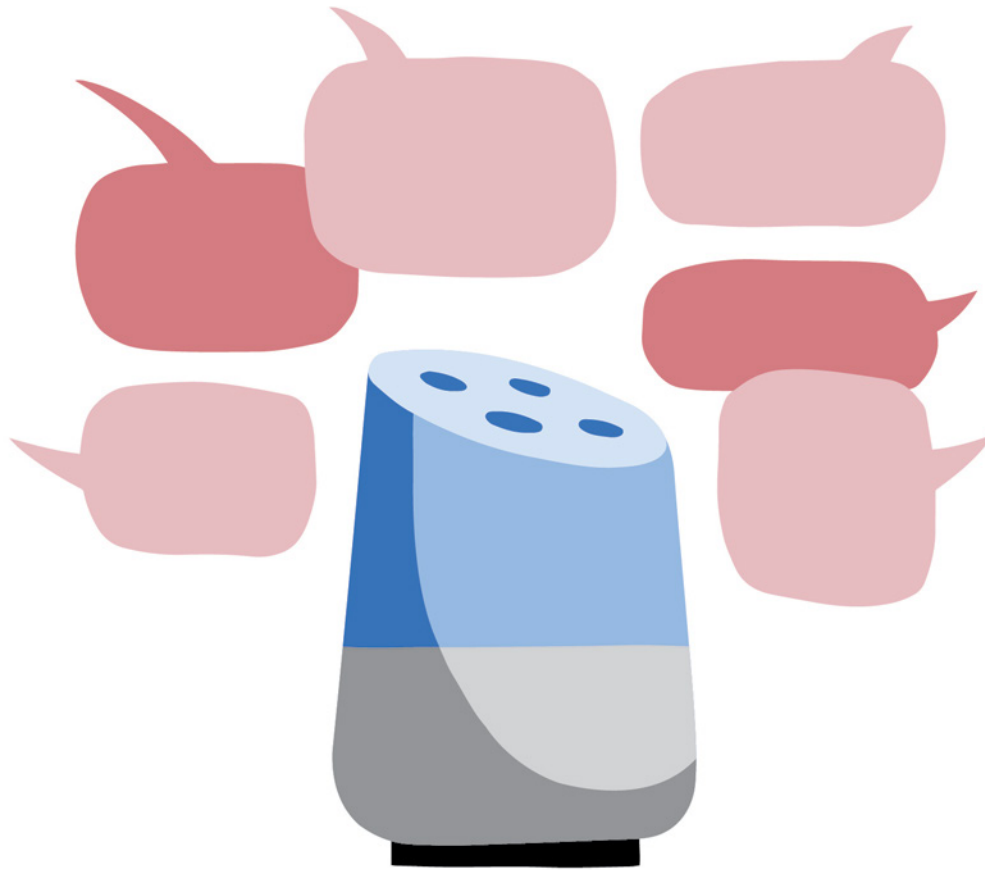
RETHINK KPIS

KPIs are only KPIs when they are key. Any more than six key measures of success is too many. Get too many and they start to confuse decision making and prioritization. We often choose KPIs that are the cheapest to measure accurately, easiest to attribute to our actions and quickest to change. Unfortunately, such metrics are typically useless and merely act as proxies to the harder-to-measure things that matter far more. Moving to fewer, bolder and perhaps more abstract targets can give people freedom to create far more success in their own ways. ■



Industry provocateur

Tom Goodwin is a leading voice on technology and the changing world. He is the author of *Digital Darwinism: Survival of the Fittest in the Age of Business Disruption*, host of *The Edge* video series on Euronews and founder of consultancy firm All We Have Is Now.



THE RIGHT TOUCH OF TECH

By Mike Gunderson

What to consider when exploring technology integration that adds value to marketing efforts.

Remember when we were told websites and email would eliminate all print advertising? Or that the iPhone and social media would put the post office out of business? But here we are, a quarter-century later, successfully sending millions of mail pieces resulting in new leads and customers.

What has changed, however, is how direct mail as a media channel can integrate with new digital technologies to bring out the best in both. And even as a print-on-paper guy, I see how digital integrations continue to make offline media more engaging, efficient and fun.

Recently, I launched my own tech company, Respond Fast, focused on making it easier for people to use their smart speakers to respond to direct mail offers and enhance their brand experience. The lessons I have taken from that – how to get marketers to embrace the tech and their customers to use it – also apply more broadly to organizations seeking to integrate technology into their overall marketing efforts.

Here are some key considerations.

DOES IT SERVE A PURPOSE?

Ask yourself this first: What are you trying to achieve with your chosen tech integration?

For example, QR codes have made quite a comeback as touchless tech has been so important throughout the pandemic. But not long ago, they were all but dead. The early QR codes sent customers to non-responsive websites, thereby creating horrible viewing experiences. In addition, Apple's lack of camera support for iPhones made adoption even more difficult.

Fast-forward to today. Almost all websites are responsive. Built-in cameras with native QR code scanning enable consumers to point, shoot and go directly to the information they want to access without downloading an app. This has made this tech a great option to get the customer the information they need fast, with 100% attribution for the marketer.

IS IT EASY TO INTEGRATE?

Don't get blinded by shiny object syndrome. There are many cool tech integrations out

there. But are they easy to integrate into your existing campaigns? Do you have the time and budget to make them successful?

Think about video mailers, where the mailer itself has an integrated screen and speaker to tell the story. Or augmented reality, an incredible experience when done right. With time and money, these are great additions to a campaign. Unfortunately, the significant investment required can be hard to convince a client or brand to commit to as a one-off.

Like many media, direct mail has a production process, so consider costs and timing as part of your overall strategy or you will blow your budget and miss your response window.

DOES IT SUPPORT YOUR BRAND EXPERIENCE?

The pandemic has made brand building and customer experience even harder. Businesses are struggling to make connections with customers.

Take McDonald's. Before the gig economy, the chain's brand would consume the consumer. But now, consumers have menu items saved for fast ordering via app, with the food delivered by a driver not associated with the brand. This makes brand consistency even harder for McDonald's (and every other restaurant and retailer).

Printed materials such as direct mail or packaging can help build and maintain a brand experience for these companies. For example, if you know the address to which the meal is delivered, send a thank-you card or postcard using a daily trigger campaign. Or make the packaging work harder by adding a voice-activated call to action to the bag, cup or burger wrapper, allowing the consumer to receive a thank-you message right from their smart speaker.

Personal touches can help increase brand affinity and build connection to that brand. Brand equity is fading quickly for many companies. Integration of these kinds of technology can deepen their relationship and improve recall when customers are ready to buy more.

“As marketers, we need to push our clients to think creatively.”

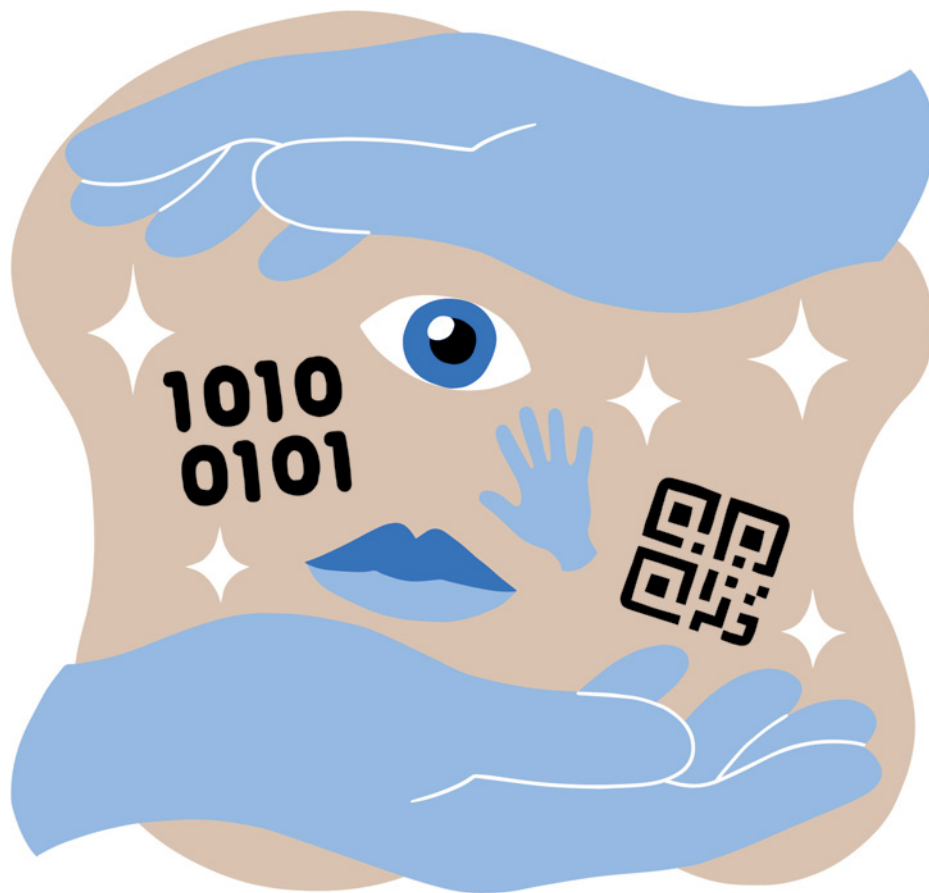
DOES IT ADD VALUE?

Any integrated technology within your marketing should make sense and add value for the audience.

As marketers, we need to push our clients to think creatively. But many of these technologies require consumers to adopt new ways of doing things, and if we as marketers don't make it compelling, not only are we affecting the outcomes of our campaigns, but we could be ruining the tech for everyone by not considering why and how we are using it and how it impacts user experience. ■



Direct marketing leader **Mike Gunderson** is the founder and president of Gunderson Direct Inc. and founder of Respond Fast. With roots in creativity and entrepreneurship, he has previously served as president of Entrepreneurs' Organization Silicon Valley and has served on the organization's board for more than a decade.



MAKING SENSE OF INTEGRATION

There's a world of ways to integrate data, tech and creativity to get in touch with your audience.

Key Takeaways

Putting audiences in touch with their senses helps brands stand out in a digitized world.

QR codes open direct mail up to a world of omni-channel possibilities.

Data integration improves the relevance of targeting and the return on media.

When we talk about media integration, it's usually with a focus on the integration between different channels. While that's a vital conversation, there are other integration considerations that can have a big impact on how touchpoints (and the messages and content they carry) connect with audiences.

As we continue to digitize the world, media channels need to work harder to captivate and convert people. That's where offline channels like direct mail come into play.

Direct mail cuts across marketing, customer experience and shopping. This versatile channel can help you get in touch with the senses, create an omni-channel brand interface and plug in to greater relevance. It just takes a strategic lens – and a bit of creativity – to integrate the senses, technology and data into your marketing efforts.

So, how does direct mail help put some sense into brand marketing efforts?

IN TOUCH WITH THE SENSES

In a world already dominated by visual media, the further sensory deprivation caused by a rush to digital transformation has caused brands to lose touch (and all other senses) with their audiences. But all is not lost. By thinking more holistically about how to engage the senses in media execution, brands can improve connections with audiences, elevate emotional resonance and extend time spent with the brand, all toward influencing purchase behaviour.

In a *Forbes* article on retail and the senses, Pamela N. Danziger states, “*Shoppers engaged through all five senses in the store spend more time there and are more likely to make purchases.*” That fact makes multi-sensory, customizable media channels like direct mail a key in bridging this widening sensory gap between physical and digital brand experiences.

Let's look at (and feel and listen to and smell and taste) some of the thinking around engaging each of the five senses.



Nearly all media starts with what we see. Visual communication incorporates the architecture and words of the message, but also its design. To stand out, ensure the piece uses images, colour, format and distinctive brand assets in design.

Take Gothenburg Homeless Aid. The Swedish organization used a simple letter format to dramatize the effects of life on the streets. They took a beautifully written letter and let it spend the night on the streets. They exposed it to the same cold and wet conditions as those experiencing homelessness in Gothenburg. Then it was mailed. Once opened, the cleverly understated letter allowed readers to visualize what it must be like to spend a night out in the elements.



Dropping a brand right in an audience's hands is potent. Through different formats, paper types and production effects, brands can move beyond images and headlines to give a message a different feeling. As a physical medium held in our hands, direct mail reinforces memorability and reduces cognitive load versus digital media. The physical format of direct mail affords a tangible opportunity to really take advantage of shape, texture and touch interactivity.

HUMIRA, a prescription medication for rheumatoid arthritis, used direct mail aimed at rheumatology professionals to showcase how difficult the simplest tasks can be for people with the disease. Its shoelace mailer had a cover image of a sneaker with real shoelaces that needed to be untied to reveal the message: “*With RA that could have taken a lot longer.*” The piece used touch to reinforce the importance of HUMIRA's drug efficacy and that not all rheumatoid arthritis medications are the same.



The at-home environment is a great place for a brand to make some noise. Through voice activation, embedded sound chips or QR codes linking to audio content, there are many ways to use sound to help in product/service exploration, engagement or evaluation.

Bacardi teased viewers with a video ad that was an abbreviated new song release. Select viewers, who engaged with the video, were sent a 12-inch limited edition vinyl record with the full version of the song. The LP further acted as a zoetrope picture disk. When played, the still photos emblazoned on the album created the illusion of a dance video. The direct mailing of the LP amplified back into social media, extending reach for the Bacardi message #DoWhatMovesYou.



Scent reinforces memory and can be integrated in numerous ways into direct mail to encourage discovery, exploration and trial. Scent can also accompany physical media as a consistent part of branding or as part of leveraging behavioural economics – think of that distinct Aveda scent whenever you walk by their stores.

Bulk Cat Litter Warehouse wanted to engage cat owners with a litter promotion. But how do you get people to pay attention to a low-involvement product? You target the cats – the real decision makers. By spraying catnip on a direct mail piece featuring a deal on kitty litter, the brand got all the attention it needed. Once the cats picked up the scent, so did their owners.



Direct mail is the perfect channel to give people a taste of what they are missing through brand sampling and personal interaction. Bolder taste makers, however, might consider turning a direct mail piece into a snack with edible peel-and-taste strips. Despite the opportunity, many food and beverage brands are still not taking advantage of the many ways to increase the taste of their marketing.

Air France wanted to raise awareness of its *savoir faire* approach to passenger relations and commitment to in-flight comfort. The brand collaborated with a food specialist to create the first chewing gum that “*tastes like France*,” mailed it to the media and influencers, and distributed it on flights and in its lounges. The airline helped passengers relieve in-flight pressure changes with a truly French gum, enhancing customer experience and brand perception.

AN ENHANCED PHYSICAL INTERFACE

A world of technology integration puts omnichannel direct mail at your fingertips – and one of the simplest and most versatile ways to deliver connected direct mail is through QR codes.

A QR code is a two-dimensional barcode that can do just about anything, from opening a web page to making a call, saving information, scheduling an event or accessing content of all types. In practical terms, QR codes can help you track user data related to time, date and location of scan. They can also provide information related to engagement and response.

Thanks to smartphone penetration and embedded camera readability, QR codes are now nearly universally accessible and user friendly.

Let’s look at some of the ways that QR codes enhance direct mail and make the channel a smart choice.

Digital content sharing: QR codes can activate digital content like video or audio to create deeper engagement that supports further exploration or evaluation. Link experiential marketing and direct mail together to connect audiences to content that enhances anticipation or post-purchase confidence.

Shopping shortcuts: QR codes can be leveraged to create a shopping shortcut between a catalogue and a website purchase, or even unlock personalized website shopping pages or discounts. Through augmented reality, QR codes can help people see what an item might look like in their home.

Retargeting: Once the QR code lands a user on a web page, use first-party cookie data to retarget them digitally through display ads and email, thereby increasing the effectiveness of digital targeting efforts.

Promotions: QR codes help customers take a coupon or limited-time offer with them to the store (even if they forget to bring the direct mail piece), thus improving conversion.

Customer service: QR codes in a direct mail piece help avoid negative social media comments, complaints or questions by providing a direct way to reach brands. Additionally, use QR codes to get feedback and customer profile information or to learn more about the customer.



PLUGGING IN TO DATA

For most marketers, getting data isn’t the problem. The challenge comes in capturing, organizing and using that data in ways that improve targeting relevance, channel orchestration and the ability to capture performance. *INCITE* asked Canada Post Smartmail Marketing data partners about the current role of data integration, especially as it relates to targeting, direct mail integration and performance.

Why is data integration important to channel performance today?

Envionics Analytics | For marketers, there has never been a more exciting time to talk about data integration. Privacy-compliant data is easier than ever to combine to help solve complex business problems. Data that can measure how different channels are being used, who is using them and how they perform is critical in an increasingly fractured marketplace. Effectively integrated and used data results in better targeting and increased ROI.

Trendline Interactive | Customers now transact with, learn about, receive and respond to marketing messages through multiple channels – and they expect companies to know them across them all. To this end, data integration across the customer journey (online, email, SMS, social media, call centers and offline) provides a complete 360-degree view of the customer. It also allows marketers and their analytic teams to more accurately target and optimize every message to be valuable to the audience and the organization.

Consumer Intelligence Group | Two key reasons: efficiency and effectiveness. Unless you are a large organization that has invested in a data warehouse or data lake, odds are high your data is siloed, as is your approach to media buying. With budgets being squeezed in this new normal, marketers must be able to target, locate and buy audiences across all channels, from direct mail to digital, which can only happen with integrated data.

Boire Analytics | Everyone should recognize the value of data. But the most important element of all this data work is its actual integration into one analytical file. For us, a component of this integration was capturing any information that pertained to various marketing channels. In capturing this information at the individual customer level, we were then able to develop better marketing attribution tools that could more effectively assign the right marketing revenue to the right marketing channel.

How can marketers get more out of the data they gather and use?

Environics Analytics | Stitch disparate data together (both yours and third party) to have a more complete and consolidated view of customers, prospects and the marketplace overall. Believe it or not, this can be done easily in a privacy-compliant manner that does not require massive databases on individuals. Marketers can then go beyond just tracking specific awareness campaigns to data-driven optimization of channels and messaging that will trigger the type of engagement that is being planned.

Custometrics | Move to advanced analytics applications – predictive and prescriptive work. This gets you to measurable gains in marketing performance rapidly if done right. Build a learning system – a continuous improvement loop in which gains build through new insights. Test, test and test.

Consumer Intelligence Group | Prioritize connecting and unifying disparate data sources. Start with internal data sources and then look to append third-party data to deliver a more holistic view of your target audiences. Marketers generally don't need more data; they need insights that connect them to their target audiences across media channels. They also need to use these insights to create a continuous cycle of measurement, optimization and execution.

How can data analytics improve direct mail performance?

Trendline Interactive | Effective attribution and testing. Data-driven models can predict which customers will respond and what they will spend with any given offer

or promotion, allowing marketers to target the right customers for this channel. In an omni-channel world, data analytics can allow marketers to orchestrate multi-touch campaigns through various channels and allow campaigns to be tailored to individual needs and preferences.

Custometrics | Direct mail can suffer from bad attribution work – too much reliance on tracking codes (which many consumers don't use) and not enough analytical control for the channels around direct mail. Some digital attribution ignores direct mail altogether! Take a holistic approach: use predictive modelling to sort out relative contribution and add optimization only once you have a highly accurate model (90% or better accuracy in explaining performance variation).

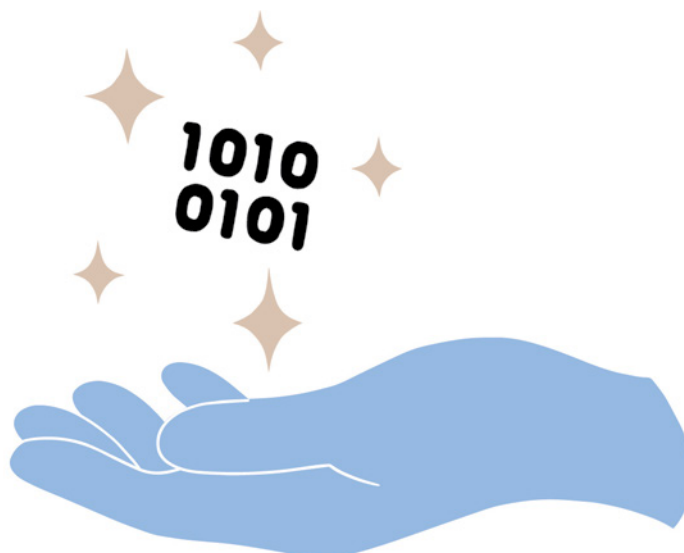
What could marketers pay closer attention to?

Trendline Interactive | The demise of third party cookies and the changes to email tracking by Apple and others will make the need for first-party data more critical than ever. Direct mail is well positioned to be part of the marketing mix for companies that make first-party data a focus or who face challenges reaching customers online. Direct mail's ability to reach customers directly without fear of spam filters and to offer a tactile experience is something that many marketers may wish to test.

Environics Analytics | Understanding the intentionality of people's travels to people's values and what could trigger a reaction through messaging is not only fascinating, but it also enhances how organizations are able to understand, engage and better service their customers and broaden their customer market.

Consumer Intelligence Group | Digital and physical channels are converging and connecting in unprecedented ways. Today, we can geographically connect digital IDs to postal codes with precision in a privacy-compliant manner, connecting digital and social marketing to the homes where our future customers live. We need to continue to shift our mindset from buying based on channels to buying audiences and reaching them through the most effective combination of channels.

Boire Analytics | Given all the attention and discussion regarding data science concepts (such as machine learning and artificial intelligence), it is easy for marketers to lose sight of the fact that effective use of data is what really contributes to success. Spend more time on your data before even employing machine learning or AI algorithms toward the development of a predictive model.



MORE WAYS TO INTEGRATE DIRECT MAIL

We've taken a look at the value of greater sensory integration to emotionally captivate people, how technology integration as simple as QR codes can increase conversion and omni-channel experience, and the essential need for data integration to connect with the right audience. Additionally, we've reached back into 2021 *INCITE* issues, pulling forward some other helpful ways to enhance direct mail media integration.

ENHANCING MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY

Organizations must be mindful of integrating sustainability strategies into their media mix. Marketers have become more conscious of the need for environmental sustainability, safe brand environments, data privacy and etiquette, as well as the hidden costs of generating media noise and data waste.

Direct mail often gets a bad rap for being environmentally unfriendly. The reality is all media (online, offline, experiential or other) impact the environment. It's perfectly possible for direct mail media to maximize brand engagement while minimizing environmental impact.

DECODING THE MESSY MIDDLE WITH DIRECT MAIL

With the acceleration of digital transformation and a renewed focus on local, home has become our hub for decisions and connections – a place where convenience and experience are both a priority.

Consumer decision making has become way more complex. The authors of Think with Google's study *Decoding Decisions: Making Sense of the Messy Middle* point out that there are no typical journeys; "Instead there is a confusing web of touchpoints we likened to spaghetti." The study highlights two distinct consumer mindsets in the messy middle that touchpoints need to address – exploration and evaluation.

Integrating direct mail into the digital mix presents marketers with an ideal opportunity to unravel, or even bypass, the messy middle of the customer journey by reaching people at home to enhance exploration and shorten evaluation. Integrating direct mail makes it easy to show up and stand out in the hands of the right consumers, combining both brand and response.

SISTERING OTHER MEDIA WITH DIRECT MAIL

There's more than one way to use a channel, yet often channels get typecast. Media consultant Ian McGrath encourages marketers to "drop the perception that each media type can only do one thing. Marketers must move away from the old-school thinking of media fit, especially as the consumption of channels continues to fragment."

Direct mail is a strong performance marketing channel, but not everyone understands that it also has brand-building talents to offer. Just like all the best stories, direct mail has a beginning, middle and end.

According to a London Research/dotdigital report, direct mail plays a role at every stage of the customer journey. The U.S.

Association of National Advertisers (ANA) makes a strong case for effective integration that includes direct mail: "Rather than putting more resources and energy into the same digital channels and hoping that the results will improve, marketers should try sistering digital tactics with physical ones." Sistering digital channels, messaging and content with direct mail can increase the impact of an integrated campaign by diversifying the roles channels can play and how they can work smarter together. ■

Get the full interview with Canada Post's Smartmail Marketing data partners at *INCITE* Online, canadapost.ca/incite

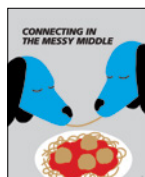


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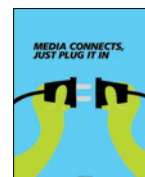
INCITE 2021 03
Direct Mail Brings Media Home



INCITE 2021 02
Connecting in the Messy Middle



INCITE 2021 01
The Path to Sustainable Media



INCITE 2020 03
Media Connects, Just Plug It In



INCITE 2020 02
The Channel Is Not Your Audience

INTEGRATION x DIRECT MAIL DATAGRAM

OMNI-CHANNEL PERFORMANCE

Digital and direct mail integration improves performance:

40% total conversion rates	68% increased website visits	63% increased response rates	60% increased ROI	53% increased leads
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Source: Compu-Mail, 2020

CROSS-CHANNEL INTEGRATION

Among marketing leaders, **42%** say they struggle with digital and physical touchpoint integration.



Source: *The Next Generation of Digital Asset Management*, Forrester Consulting for MediaBeacon, 2017

SENSORY INTEGRATION

Brand impact increases by **70%** when **3+** senses are stimulated in a message.



Source: *USPS Mail Moments: Spring 2019 Review*, Summit Research for USPS

INCREASED ATTENTION

Integrated digital and direct mail media campaigns get **39%** more attention than digital-only campaigns.



Source: *Connecting for Action*, Canada Post, 2016



WINDOW SHOPPING

Integrating catalogues into an online sales strategy increased revenue by **163%**.

Source: *10 Direct Mail Marketing Statistics That Will Surprise You*, MSP for USPS, 2020

REACH MAXIMIZATION

Integrating direct mail with TV maximizes reach and reduces over-exposure.



Source: *TouchPoints Integration*, JICMAIL, 2019

INCREASED CONVERSION

Direct mail integrated with digital ads can increase conversion by **20%**.



Source: *Drive True Omnichannel Marketing by Combining Direct Mail with Digital Channels*, IWCO Direct, 2017

SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION

Seeing mail first boosts social media ad dwell time and recall.

- > **30%** increase in ad dwell time
- > **44%** higher memory encoding to social media ads



Source: *Royal Mail MarketReach*, Neuro-Insight, 2018



IN THE NEXT ISSUE

ONE-TO-ONE

- › Explore the new world of one-to-one commerce
- › Getting into a direct-to-consumer mindset
- › The connection between one-to-one and the home
- › Answering the first-party data imperative
- › Learn what direct mail knows about one-to-one

“INCITE is my go-to resource to discover what’s on the minds of marketers. I often quote from its pages knowing full well the information is well researched and on the leading edge.”

– Christine McArthur
Managing Partner, Mass Minority

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