



# Clearing the air on green DM

Despite online growth, the Economic Impact Analysis 2006, commissioned by the DMA (UK) claims direct mail still dominates - accounting for 26.1 per cent of company's overall expenditure. This certainly bodes well for the direct mail industry, but what about the environment? The threat of opt-in legislation still looms large, with cries from all corners for direct marketers to 'clean up their act'. Even DMA chairman Rosemary Smith was recently quoted at the DMA summer lunch as cautioning: "We must consider whether all paper-based direct marketing should be on recycled paper". Ben Daly from Response One Group discusses the measures we can take to help reduce DM effects in the environment.

At the end of the day, it's going to take more than recycled paper to make DM print and production truly green. For direct marketers to improve their eco credentials, it's essential that every option available be explored throughout all aspects of the production process.

**On a typical 300,000 mailing, the impact can be huge. It effectively means you are wasting 45,000 envelopes, letterheads and brochures.**

#### ENSURE YOUR DATA IS RELEVANT

Poor address management significantly affects the industry's attempts to reduce its environmental footprint. Before a mailing, make sure the data has been screened for data hygiene within the last month. This involves

the removal of duplicate, deceased and gone away records.

Mailing un-cleaned data can mean sending as much as 20 per cent of your direct marketing campaign to people who have died, gone away, are already existing customers or are duplicates.

On a typical 300,000 mailing, the impact can be huge. It effectively means you are wasting 45,000 envelopes, letterheads and brochures. That's enough to fill well over 100 standard household recycling bins, not to mention the extra energy used in the printing, personalisation, enclosing and delivery of these unwanted packs.

#### MAKE SUPPRESSION A PRIORITY

Only with a better understanding of the benefits will more advertisers make suppression a standard process. There remain clients who instantly assume that suppression tools simply won't work for their campaign. Time and budgetary issues are considered the biggest barriers, largely because the costs of suppression are upfront; and while clean data is vital in maximising efficiency, these benefits are not immediate so can be less obvious in the early stages of a campaign.

Running suppression files can typically add anything from 1-5 working days to your mailing schedule, so it may feel like an obvious place to cut corners when deadlines are tight. However, if advertisers thought of it another way, they may be less inclined to skip the process. For example, take a 300,000 mailing: by suppressing properly, you remove 45,000 records costing around £8,000 in data

processing and suppression costs and adding a week to your mailing schedule. However, while it might be tempting to save the £8,000 and mail a week earlier, essentially there are 45,000 packs [costing you £13,000 in extra list rental, print and production costs] for which you will get little or no response.

**Traditional direct marketing thinking states the more elements you put into a mail pack the better it will perform...**

#### SIZE IT UP

Traditional direct marketing thinking states the more elements you put into a mail pack the better it will perform which is a concept tried and tested by several traditional users. However, these days we need to think about other ways of boosting response rather than 'throwing paper at the problem'. You could think about utilising digital media in your mail pack - consider services, which allow you to send a personalized CD Rom to contacts. It might make more sense than a large brochure. Perhaps you could switch from an A5 4 page insert, to a 2-page option? The great thing about DM is that you can test things first.

#### EVALUATE YOUR PAPER CHOICES

Could you print your inserts and other materials on a slightly lighter paper stock? For example, if you can print your inserts on 90 gsm, rather than 100 gsm stock, 10 per cent less raw material will be used to make your paper. A printer or a print buyer may be able to see the difference, but is the average



consumer really going to notice? This is the direct marketing equivalent of turning down your thermostat a couple of degrees.

Make sure the paper is either recycled, from a sustainable source or is a mixture of the two and is accredited with the FSC scheme. Many printers can also gain accreditation with FSC in their own right. This will enable you to use the FSC logo on your printed literature.



#### **ASSESS YOUR PRINTERS AND SUPPLIERS**

Try to use a printer who has gained the ISO 14001 Environmental Management certification. This ensures that the company

has been inspected and audited to make sure they have proper environmental management systems in place. However, you may find some smaller printers do not have this kind of certification (because of the amount of work required for accreditation is not economically viable). However, you should still see if they are working towards it, or if they have a proactive environmental policy.

Ask your printer about the types of ink they use; (biodegradable) vegetable based inks, waterless printing and Computer to Print (CTP) printing plates all have significant environmental benefits, particularly as they produce fewer harmful pollutants and chemicals than their conventional equivalents.

Likewise, when organising the production of a direct mail pack, where possible, group together the suppliers providing the different printed elements and the mailing house you are using to produce the pack. This will reduce the amount of transport needed to deliver the items to the mailing house.

#### **SMALL CHANGES GO A LONG WAY**

Let's face it, we all print off emails or spreadsheets to look at them, why? It's easier to read and comprehend the same idea from a sheet of paper, rather than off a screen. Paper can be looked at easily, scribbled on, modified, stored and retrieved instantly. This is why it lends itself to marketing.

But for this medium to continue to be viable now is the time to get our house in order. Whether it's inefficient production techniques, unsustainable resources, or creating excess waste by mailing gone away and deceased records, such actions can not only damage the environment but could easily place you under increased scrutiny and tarnish your brand as a whole; particularly at a time when an increasing number of mail order brands are building green initiatives into their core consumer marketing message.



*Ask your printer about the types of ink they use; (biodegradable) vegetable based inks, waterless printing and Computer to Print (CTP) printing plates all have significant environmental benefits, particularly as they produce fewer harmful pollutants and chemicals than their conventional equivalents.*

**Daniel Bruce**  
Marketing Manager  
Response One  
01225 480480  
[www.responseone.co.uk](http://www.responseone.co.uk)