Marketing a Marketing Company

By Michelle Tempesta

Talk about pressure! We’re in front of our clients every day, making recommendations about tackling their marketing challenges, so when it comes to marketing our own firm, the weight is heavy.

You may have received a few large mail pieces featuring images of marbles from us over the course of the last few months. Here’s the story behind the scenes…

In 2005, Diamond Marketing Solutions acquired Jett Services, a family-owned fulfillment company that had built an exceptional online ordering and inventory management system in addition to establishing processes that were known to reduce costs and deliver quality to its clients. The organization, founded by Lorraine Jette and operated by her son, Bob Jette, had developed strong relationships with its long list of clients. Diamond Marketing Solutions sought to build upon what they had nurtured over the years and to expand it.

For years, marketing efforts at Diamond Marketing Solutions were scarce. As a marketing company, we were the epitome of the “cobbler’s kids” when it came to self-promotion.

Late last year, with a focus on our fulfillment service line, we launched a six-touch direct mail program. Lo and behold, it’s working! With a 3% response rate after the third drop, our company is buzzing about the success – so we thought we’d share our experience with you.

After a few meetings with key people to establish the objectives of the program, identify the audience, and produce some great ideas, the Marble Project was born.

The biggest challenge we faced was finding the correct decision makers and influencers to target with our message. Simply buying a list of “fulfillment people” was not an option, so we decided to use a compiled list strategy. The mailing list consisted of our existing clients and prospects, as well as rented lists covering companies fitting a certain criteria that were headquartered in relatively close proximity to any of our five facilities.
FROM THE CEO

Dear Colleague,

At least once a week, I’m approached by someone with the question, “What is the future of direct mail marketing?”

Here’s my take on it.

There are several things happening today that I believe will impact the attractiveness of direct mail marketing in the future.

First, the decline in newspaper circulation means that retailers and other advertisers will seek alternatives to FSI and display advertisements in the near term. We may see those existing newspaper ad dollars redirected toward various forms of direct mail marketing.

Second, consider where your customers/prospects are. It’s somewhat of a guessing game to determine where they’re surfing on the web – and you need to know that in order to buy results-generating ad space. In 2009, when there were 234 million websites, 90 trillion emails sent, 126 million blogs, 350 million people on Facebook using 500,000 apps, and 27.3 million tweets on Twitter per day¹, competition for attention was intense. Conversely, the level of competition for attention in the mailbox these days is appealing.

In 2009, we saw a major shift in marketing dollars from direct mail to email or online activities. In a recent Wall Street Journal article, a group of business owners were confessing their misjudgment in where they had invested marketing dollars. Each of them gave a specific example of the percentage of business lost due to their marketing tactic shift. In fact, their customers actually admitted that they were looking for the direct mail pieces to remind them that it was time to buy.

Third, as email inboxes continue to bulge with marketing messages, we will see a decline in open rates, click-through rates, and return-on-investment statistics. I believe marketers will thereby seek alternative media to bolster their returns and will reconsider direct mail marketing.

Like the economic law of supply and demand, where supply has to meet demand to reach an equilibrium market price, we’ll see some major changes in the direct mail supplier market over the next few years while the industry adjusts to match the change in demand. Diamond Marketing Solutions is here for the long run. We will continue to adjust our service mix to meet the needs of savvy marketers like you.

Sincerely,

Bruce D’Angelo
CEO

¹Data Source: royal.pingdom.com
How could DMS possibly help Sony Pictures Classics get nominated?

It’s simple. Sony Pictures Classics and Motion Picture Mailing depend on Diamond Marketing Solutions’ fulfillment team to deliver unreleased movies to more than 6,500 members of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences (AMPAS). The AMPAS membership includes Hollywood’s finest actors, directors, producers, and writers. The DVDs are advance-screening copies of Sony films that are not yet available to the public, and they are mailed out to be reviewed by all members of the AMPAS in the hopes of garnering numerous Academy Award nominations.

This year, Sony Pictures Classics was nominated for 9 Academy Awards, including:

1. “An Education” – Best Picture nominee
2. Helen Mirren – “The Last Station” – Best Actress nominee
3. Carey Mulligan – “An Education” – Best Actress nominee
4. Christopher Plummer – “The Last Station” – Best Supporting Actor nominee
5. “The White Ribbon” – Best Foreign Language Film nominee
6. “An Education” – Best Adapted Screenplay nominee
8. “Coco Before Chanel” – Best Costume Design nominee
9. “Loin de Paname” from “Paris 36” – Best Original Song nominee

The client was excited to announce: “This has been one of the biggest award nomination years for Sony Classics, and Diamond Marketing Solutions was a critical component that helped make these nominations become a reality.” With on-time, quality delivery, DMS enabled Sony Pictures Classics to get its movies to the right people at the right time, resulting in a major impact on the company’s business.

These are highly confidential, time-sensitive, premium-quality packaging mailings. Requirements include perfectly assembling each package and keeping the absolute confidentiality of the mailing list preserved. The project required above-average privacy safeguards and quality control scrutiny. Diamond Marketing Solutions performed far above even these extremely high standards, despite rigid deadlines, very little advanced warning and, in doing so, earned the trust of and a recurring partnership with Sony Pictures Classics and Motion Picture Mailing.

Diamond Marketing Solutions also handles movie mailings that are sent to members of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), the Writers Guild of America (WGA), and the Directors Guild of America (DGA).

Working Behind the Scenes to Help Sony Land 9 Academy Award Nominations

Happy spring!

Spring is all about fresh, new ideas. If you’re looking for some fresh, new ideas to help grow your mailing programs or update your fulfillment operations, give me a call. Our team can help you discover new ways to increase your response rates, lower your costs, and generally freshen up your existing programs.

Please contact us at 630-523-5250.
New eCommerce Website Triples Online Sales

CLIENT
Bonner Corporation is one of the largest consumer-publishing groups in America. It publishes nearly 50 special-interest magazines and related multimedia projects and events. Bonnier serves passionate, highly engaged audiences across the globe. One of the recently acquired magazines in Bonnier’s portfolio, Flying, is designed to inform, educate, and entertain people involved in either personal or business aviation. Flying’s complementary ecommerce website, known as the “Aero Shop,” offers a range of aviation-related merchandise, with a heavy emphasis on apparel.

CHALLENGE
The client faced a number of inventory management challenges stemming from communication issues between its web hosting/design firm and the warehouse that stored and fulfilled the orders. Managing inventory was cumbersome and time-consuming, not to mention inaccurate. Bonnier sought a new solution that would solve its problems involving costly back orders, slow order processing, and lack of order-tracking capability. It also wanted to provide higher-level customer support for its online shoppers.

SOLUTION
Diamond Marketing Solutions customized its online ordering and inventory management system, DiamondViewSM Fulfillment, to accommodate and exceed Bonnier’s needs. DiamondView Fulfillment provided an easy-to-use ordering portal for Bonnier’s subscribers.

The new site benefits both the online shopper and the team at Bonnier. The online shopper is now able to easily see and search for items, view the real-time in-stock availability of products, select a preferred shipping method, get an email confirmation of an order, track its progress, and receive the items at the expected time.

For Bonnier, managing inventory just became a whole lot easier. Automated low-inventory and high-inventory-use messages are instantly sent to site administrators.

The Bonnier team can quickly control pricing, select items to display on sale or in clearance areas of the site, and add or edit item descriptions and images from an intuitive administrative access dashboard.

RESULTS
Year over year, Bonnier has seen its site sales triple in volume and revenue. Its subscribers are visiting the pages more frequently. The publisher’s back-order costs have decreased substantially, and so has the cost of providing responsive service to its customers.
Plastic cards are easy for consumers to store in their wallets, which is exactly what marketers want – dedicated real estate in every consumer wallet. If your card appears there, your brand is bound to receive more attention.

Diamond Marketing Solutions delivers personalized and customized cards to consumers by helping marketers produce and deliver gift cards, membership cards, and promotional cards.

**Gift Cards.** Take a stroll through our warehouse and you'll see millions of gift cards. We store and fulfill gift cards for retailers and restaurants located all over the world. Whether orders come in for individual gift cards or your locations need to replenish their stock, Diamond Marketing Solutions can handle your gift card fulfillment needs. Our clients have the strictest gift card packaging requirements, and from “no fingerprints” to unique-shaped boxes, we'll customize your gift card program to your brand’s needs.

**Membership Cards.** Whether your customers are signing up to belong to your association, fraternal organization, loyalty program, or warranty service, delivering to them an accurate member card in a timely manner is crucial to your business.

We receive member files and fulfill member welcome kits every day. Kits include a variety of types and styles of cards, from die-cut, heavy weight-paper cards used for temporary membership to 24-mil plastic ones. Members love recognition, so presenting a membership card with their name and member number – be they thermal-imaged, embossed, laser-imaged, or applied with a high-speed inkjet – provides a physical connection between your member and your brand.

Do your membership cards require encoding on a magnetic strip so that they will interact with your point-of-sale equipment? No problem. Diamond Marketing Solutions can handle high-speed encoding combined with high-quality matching from the card to the card carrier.

**Promotional Cards.** Direct marketers are pros at figuring out what compels consumers to act. You've probably noticed an increase in its use of “faux gift cards.” Direct mail packages that include these cards have seen higher response rates than simple coupons.

There are three types of cards that you can use in your next mail package:

1. **Knockout Cards.** These cards are die-cut into a carrier and can easily be removed by the recipient.

2. **Affixed Cards.** Normally between 10 mil and 24 mil in thickness, affixed cards can be produced on a 10-point tag or a PVP plastic (or the equivalent).

3. **Clean-Release Cards.** Laser compatibility is the key for clean-release cards. A 10-mil PVS card is integrated into a laser-imaging form.

For your next mail package, we can personalize a faux gift card that includes the recipient’s name, customer number, and any other personalized information you need to track response and make shopping with you easy.
Our campaign strategy was designed around the buying cycle for fulfillment services. From experience, we know that it takes about one year to become part of a buyer’s selection set. Fulfillment decisions impact firms for between two and three years, so companies traditionally do extensive due diligence to ensure that they’ve selected the appropriate vendor for their needs. Existing fulfillment agreements can come up for renewal at any time during the year. So, our strategy included staying in front of the audience monthly, having the sales team reach out to the mailing list on a regular basis, and motivating the audience to experience our solution firsthand by placing an order via our online ordering and inventory management system.

Our creative team devised a plan to capture attention in the mailbox. An oversized postcard measuring 12” x 9” was designed, and the team created a six-touch campaign that carried a series of custom marble images in support of bold headlines. With a bright white, 160-pound cover stock and sharp marble images that were hit with gloss varnish to create a glassy feel, the piece had a distinct look that helped it stand apart from traditional business mail.

The messages on the pieces addressed the gamut of typical fulfillment manager pitfalls such as lost inventory, poor inventory forecasting, and incorrect shipments, and they articulated how working with Diamond Marketing Solutions would alleviate all of those issues.

Since our goal was to compel the reader to order something from our system, we needed a set of inventory items that was inexpensive to purchase and ship, interesting looking, and fun. We selected marbles for those reasons, as well as the nostalgic appeal. Our target audience is between 35 and 50 years of age – the playing-marbles-at-recess generation.

We just dropped the fourth mail piece in the series of six. The results from the first three drops are exciting. Given the quality of our mailing list (we knew we had the right companies but didn’t necessarily have the correct names of influencers and decision makers), we expected a little over a half-percent response rate. But to our glee, we’re experiencing a response rate of 3% and counting!

To find out more about our fulfillment solutions and the Marble Project, call your account executive today.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**CADM’s Annual Conference**
**RESULTS2010**
May 5, 2010 | theWit Hotel, Chicago
www.cadm.org/results2010

*See Diamond Marketing Solutions’ client, MoneyGram International,* present “Breaking Into the Original Social Network” at this year’s conference.

**BMA’s Annual Conference**
**Engage!**
June 2-4, 2010 | Swissôtel, Chicago
www.marketing.org
Get a postal analysis. Postage is the most expensive piece of direct mail marketing. You may be able to cut down on that portion of your budget to allow for more touches or just to realize a savings. Ask us for a postal analysis of your annual mail program today – it’s free.