



2007 Tech Report

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Marketing Matters

Be smart about your mailings

Mailings are a part of most marketing mixes but they can be tricky to use correctly. And if you don't think about your message and your recipients you can spend a lot of money to get very few results.

In his Marketing Tips newsletter, Kevin Nunley (<http://DrNunley.com>) says that mailing works better when it is tightly targeted. He offers these do's and don'ts to consider before doing a mass mailing.

- Don't mail to strangers. The best people to receive your mail are those on your prospect list. These people know who you are and are familiar with the service you offer and are likely to read what you send them.
- Don't try to close. A mailing is a marketing vehicle as opposed to a selling tool. It is designed to stimulate qualified responses from prospects.
- Don't mail too much. You need to economize on the amount of paper you send out just for the sake of holding down costs. If the mailing is effective and you get a lot of responses, be sure you have the ability to follow up.
- Don't always expect a response. A good sales letter may not yield a phone call or inquiry but it can open the door so that your follow-up call will be accepted.
- Do be clear about what you want the letter or marketing piece to do. If your postcard addresses a problem your prospects may be having, be sure that your message follows through with a solution you can provide. If you make your letter appear that it came from one person to another – handwritten address or using the return address in the heading – you'll get a better response.
- Use postcards for events. If you are having a special seminar, grand opening or some type of ceremony, you'll find postcards are a very effective way to get the word out.
- Scrutinize your mailing list. If you are not mailing to valid addresses you are wasting money. Look for references when you purchase lists from others.

Highlights

- **Nuts & bolts**
- **Working smarter**
- **Hints to make you more efficient**

Management Issues

Free speech in the work environment

Employees have a right to free speech while employers have the need to control the workplace environment and protect the business. When those two factors collide, there's usually trouble.

Mark Shickman, a California employment attorney, says that employees have the right to their religious beliefs including the right to express them at work. Therefore you cannot ban religious speech in the workplace even though that might seem to be the best way to avoid any claims from other workers. Furthermore, dress and head coverings that are part of religious expression generally cannot be banned.

However, other employees have the right not to be the subject of unwanted proselytizing and avoid having religion pushed on them. You cannot force employees to attend company-sponsored religious meetings, to pray or read company documents carrying religious messages. Nor can you tolerate anti-gay messages in the workplace.

Free speech issues also extend to politics. If an HR director decided to participate in a skinhead group or an employee begins lobbying for an environmental restriction that would put your company out of business, the question of whether or not the employee can be fired is a complicated issue. A New Jersey court is now considering the question of whether or not you have to keep an employee whose outside political activities conflict with the position that person is paid to support while at work.

Background checks

If you include a consumer report in your background checks for hiring new employees, the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) has some rules about how you can use the information you obtain. The FCRA guidelines require that you:

- let the applicant or employee know in advance;
- obtain written permission;
- provide certification of compliance;
- give the employee or applicant a copy of the report if the report causes you to take adverse action.

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Working Smarter

The trap of busyness

If you frequently feel as if you are working more but getting less done, you're probably a victim of busyness – the condition that occurs when you keep jumping from one task to another, never completing the first job before a second or third one interrupts.

Busyness is a time and profit-killer according to management guru Steve Gottry. He says people need to decide what things can be done more effectively and what other things can be delegated or deleted from their to-do list. Such things as the telephone, email, meetings and paperwork are all part of the normal work day but they need not control it.

Gottry suggests a three-question test to determine how to set your schedule:

1. Will something bad happen if I don't do this task?
2. Will something good happen if I go ahead and do it?
3. Will there be a long-term impact if I don't do it?

The answer to those three questions will help you determine how you should allocate your time.

Being busy is often an excuse for not doing something you should be doing. Sometimes it is easier to become absorbed with tasks than to do the necessary planning, managing and thinking to work more effectively. So don't let busyness keep you from tackling the tough, long range projects that need your time and attention.

According to Gottry, the world is full of busy people but there is definitely a shortage of project managers, planners and strategic thinkers. He advises you to stop measuring how busy you are and instead focus on what you accomplish.

Nuts and Bolts

Suppliers are going green

The market for green building materials is up and suppliers are responding in what appears to be a shift in the construction industry. Products that will reduce energy costs, cut pollution or earn tax breaks are surfacing at trade shows as well as warehouses.

The non-profit U.S. Green Building Council has responded to the interest by offering certification in environmental construction through its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program. Contractors who obtain LEED certification may also qualify for tax credits.

Environmental issues notwithstanding, the rising cost of energy is a prime motivator for consumers who shift to green products. This factor accounts for the rising popularity of such new products such as fluorescent light fixtures that cut energy loss, skylights that direct heat and light or plastic membranes that are installed as roofing to help keep buildings cooler.

Florida developers fight tree rules

New laws designed to protect trees along the scenic roads in Seminole County are under fire from developers and builders who say the rules are too restrictive. The rules make it difficult to remove large trees and also increase the size of replacement trees developers are required to plant.

Those opposing the rules say the county has plenty of control over trees already.

The new rules are aimed to protect trees that create canopy. There is some flexibility that allows developers or the government to remove trees that might fall.



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