

marketing sider

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NEWS AND KNOWLEDGE FOR
TODAY'S MARKETER

THE ROAD TO **RECOVERY**

Moving Forward Creatively
and with Purpose

Dear Fellow Marketer:

There's truth to the adage, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." Thinking beyond what's immediately in front of you when so much is in flux can be challenging. Now more than ever, it's essential to address what is knowable and be prepared to adapt to the unknown.

Beginning on **page 6**, tech entrepreneur and creative mastermind Josh Linkner offers tips to unlocking your creativity when brainstorming. This is more important now when everyone is being challenged to reimagine "old" ways of marketing their business to rebound and grow in 2021 and beyond.

A product of the disrupted marketing landscape brought about by COVID-19 is the resurgence of direct mail. Always a dependable channel, mail might just be the missing link to your lead generation strategies, customer retention campaigns and employee communications while many people continue to work from and stick closer to home.

Direct mail consultants agree that the decision to open, save, route or toss a direct mail piece is made in just two or three seconds. Whether your goal is to secure an order, inquiry or donation, or drive traffic to your physical location or website, you can take steps to ensure a direct mail campaign generates the desired response. See **pages 2-3** to learn how.

While personal health and safety is likely to remain top-of-mind for the foreseeable future, it's expected that in-person selling environments, sales calls and group meetings will be anything but normal. There are still many ways you can maintain important relationships and start new ones.

If you're looking for creative ways to connect, please let us know. We are here to support you, whether that's virtually or safely face-to-face. We thrive on positivity and are looking forward to what the new year has in store for all of us.

Take care,

Your friends at Allegra



C o n t e n t s



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IT DELIVERS!



5 Reasons

Direct Mail is Vital to Your
Multi-channel Marketing

Whether you find it in an email folder, in the company mailroom or the box at your curb, “junk mail” is unwanted, unsolicited and sent in bulk. In a word, it’s a nuisance. No one likes being spammed by electronic or physical mail.

Rather than be discouraged, successful direct marketers are motivated to deliver mail campaigns that are relevant to and welcomed by highly targeted prospects, customers and supporters.

In today’s unexpected environment that has kept many people closer to home and disconnected from their usual routines, direct mail marketing has seen a resurgence in popularity for a wide range of industries across local, regional and national markets. Many people have lightheartedly joked on social media channels that going to the mailbox has become an outing – and they’re dressing up to do it!

All fun aside, studies have compared how our brains respond differently to physical and virtual stimuli. The research revealed that engagement with a printed piece shows more brain activity than with digital views, suggesting that physical material is more “real” to us and involves more emotionally vivid memories.

Still, any single marketing channel can’t do it all. Mail teaming with digital strategies and each playing to its strengths results in a multi-channel campaign that delivers the strongest performance.

Digital tools and technologies, like personalized landing pages for response, elevate a simple print project to a can’t-miss, easy-to-respond-to piece that is well within reach of small business marketers and nonprofits. Think in terms of print *and* rather than print *or* other marketing channels.

Here are five characteristics of direct mail that make it a powerhouse, and as part of a multi-channel campaign, can help to drive more sales or donations, enhance customer relationships and deliver long-term return on your investment.

1 LIST AVAILABILITY AND REACH | The ability to target mail by geography, interests, specific demographics and lifestyle characteristics gives personalized and relevant messaging laser-sharp focus for improved response.

If you’ve paused acquisition mailings, consider reengaging with further refinement to your mailing list. You will likely experience more attrition in your customer base during a downturn, and prospect mailings can help you regain lost business. Alternatively, no-list mailings to a defined geographic area are an affordable, fast and effective strategy for local businesses whose customer base is close by.

2 LOW NUISANCE/LOW THREAT | There are some products and services that are a natural fit for direct mail. Nonprofits, service industries and restaurants are a few. And when someone needs a longer period to research and compare their options, mail can give you an intimate space to do it.

It doesn’t mean we are going to stop shopping online. Marketers should have email in their arsenal for nurturing relationships and special promotions, recognizing that there can be suspicion about data security among customers and prospects who prefer physical mail.

3 HIGHER RESPONSE RATES | Physicality may positively influence the effectiveness of the call to action. A recent study shows 42% of direct mail recipients read or scan the pieces they receive.¹ Advertising mail is kept in a household for 17 days on average, meaning it offers multiple opportunities for recipients to take the desired action.²

4 FLEXIBILITY OF FORMAT | Mail is highly adaptable to your audience and campaign objectives. With formats including postcards, letters, self-mailers and dimensional packages, mail is telling your story in print. Digital messages can sometimes look sterile. A mail piece supports long and short content, and different paper textures, inks or finishes all work to make the emotional connection that is so powerful.

5 LONG SHELF LIFE | A tangible printed mailer that can be set aside and picked up later or passed on is appealing in households and businesses. Yes, you can forward an email. But days or weeks later, that’s history. There are dozens of more emails right behind the one you just got. ■

Let us know when you’re ready to put the power of direct mail to work for you. Our pros can help.

¹Data and Marketing Association

²Royal Mail

HOW TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL LOCAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

5 STEPS TO BUILD YOUR STRATEGY



1

Assess the Situation



2

Determine Goals and Budget



3

Identify Your Target Audience



4

Outline Marketing Tactics



5

Execute, Measure, Improve

TIPS TO DRIVE BETTER RESULTS



- Figure out who your target audience is and look for specific ways to reach that demographic.
- Improve brand recognition with consistency across all online and offline channels.



- Encourage customers to leave positive reviews on Google and Yelp listings, social media and your company website.
- Post your company's information in local directories (ex: Angie's List, Yelp, etc.).



- Develop a loyalty program for repeat customers.
- Become a member of your local Chamber of Commerce and register with the Better Business Bureau program to promote repeat business.

eCommerce Reshapes a Regional Bank by Redeploying Resources for Added Efficiency

Challenge

A regional bank with 55 branches needed a better, more efficient way to get promotional materials to employees across their network. They had someone who was fielding phone calls and packing and shipping orders. It was supposed to be just a small part of her role. But over time, it had grown to occupy more than half of her day.

They approached our team to see if we had any ideas and solutions that would:

- Reduce the time spent in the order/proof/approval process
- Manage the needs of multiple locations from a central “location”
- Track material usage
- Improve employee time management
- Build in faster order turnaround
- Get real-time pricing and instant postal/shipping rates

Solution

It was easy to see that an online ordering system would solve their challenges. We began by building a WorkStream™ eCommerce website, just for their promotional materials. Not long after, print communications products were added to the site, once everyone in the organization saw how user-friendly the process was.

The portal has since morphed into a complete storefront with company-branded promotional items and other marketing and print materials.

What happened to the mid-level employee who had been responsible for these time-consuming tasks? Having a new site that was easy and convenient for all the users enabled her to redirect her time to higher-value activities like marketing the bank to new customers.

The site saves resources for the bank beyond time. Because items can be produced and delivered as needed, stockpiling pre-printed materials in a warehouse became obsolete.

The branch office employees are happy because they are receiving materials faster through more timely delivery. Instead of waiting for an in-house colleague to find a moment to place and then ship an order, our professional team nimbly handles fulfillment and shipping.

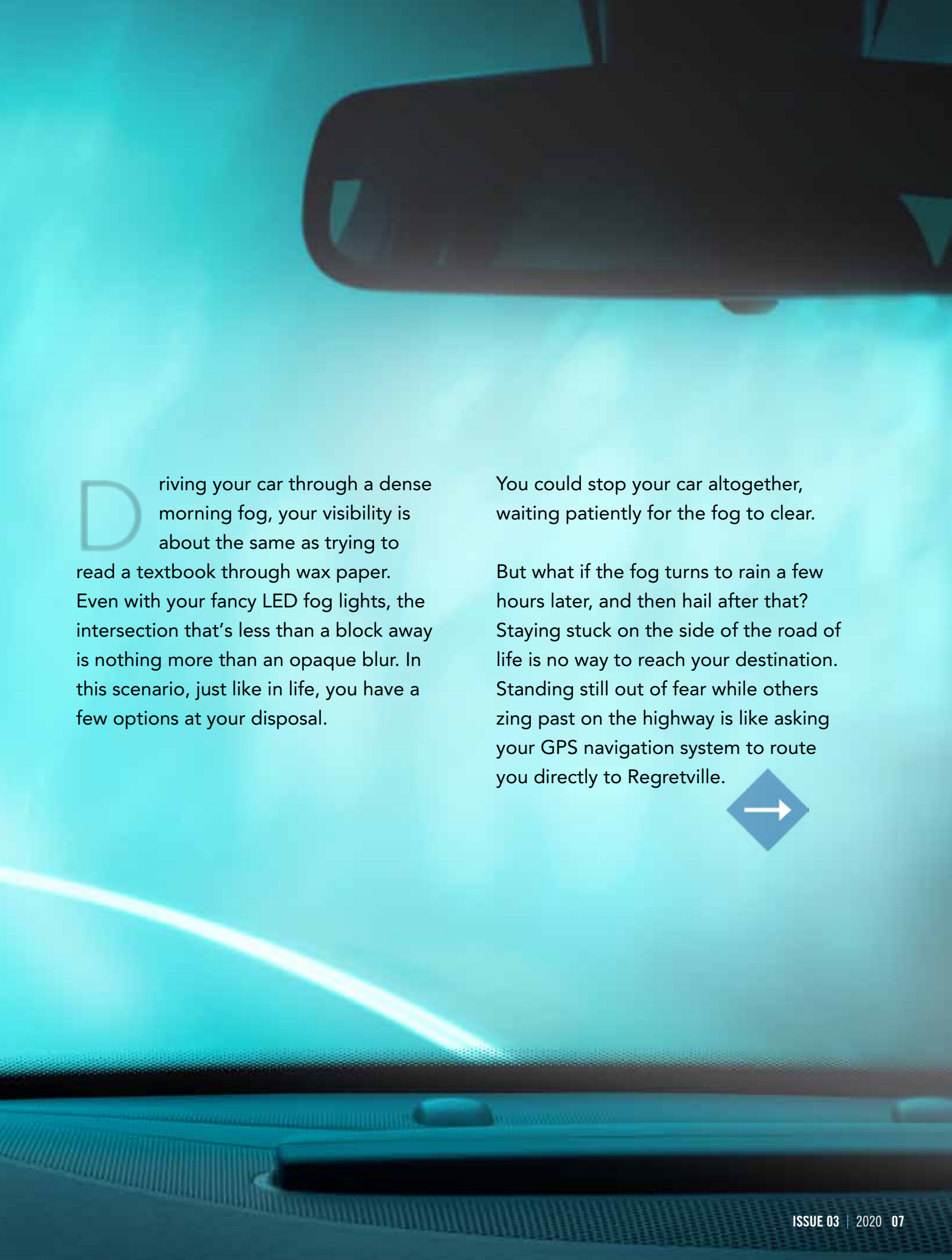
And now with a window into real-time inventory, someone who might want 20 umbrellas for an event next week can immediately see that there are only 10 available and pick something else – information that might have been delayed in the past while waiting for a call back from their busy colleague. ■

To learn how you can benefit from WorkStream eCommerce, contact us.



THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Moving Forward Creatively
and with Purpose



Driving your car through a dense morning fog, your visibility is about the same as trying to read a textbook through wax paper. Even with your fancy LED fog lights, the intersection that's less than a block away is nothing more than an opaque blur. In this scenario, just like in life, you have a few options at your disposal.

You could stop your car altogether, waiting patiently for the fog to clear.

But what if the fog turns to rain a few hours later, and then hail after that? Staying stuck on the side of the road of life is no way to reach your destination. Standing still out of fear while others zing past on the highway is like asking your GPS navigation system to route you directly to Regretville.



Another option is to barrel ahead at full throttle. While there's a slight chance that you'll arrive early to your breakfast meeting, there's a much higher probability that you'll end up in a collision. Reduced visibility hampers your ability to react to changing conditions, which makes the forge-ahead strategy particularly dangerous.

The best approach, in my humble opinion, is to proceed with caution and focus on the 20 feet ahead of you right now. On high alert for shifting circumstances, you remain grounded in the moment and ready to react. As you safely conquer the first 20 feet, the next 20 that were previously a blur now come into perfect view. You proceed deliberately and purposefully, 20 feet at a time.

In the midst of a global pandemic, political turmoil, and economic instability, how should we move forward in our current state of heavy fog? Twenty feet at a time. Freezing like a deer in headlights could actually be just as risky as blindly racing ahead, with neither approach likely to deliver you safely through the haze. In these times of heightened uncertainty, we need to remain present, aware and ready to course-correct as new information emerges.

We're all feeling stressed about where the road may lead. But the best countermeasure to our fog-filled times is to slowly and deliberately tackle the next 20 feet. The clouds will eventually clear and there will be sunny days ahead. In the meantime, let's proceed thoughtfully . . . one 20-foot stretch at a time.

– Josh Linkner



Marketing Insider tapped tech entrepreneur and *New York Times* best-selling author Josh Linkner to offer ways to kickstart your marketing planning using inventive brainstorming techniques.

With so much change and still many unknowns, here are eight of his most powerful brainstorming methods designed to unleash your creativity – just when you need it most!

1 RoleStorming – Instead of brainstorming as yourself (and being solely responsible for any ideas generated), here you get to brainstorm in character. First, select anyone you want to pretend to be – from movie star to mad scientist to villain to sports hero – and brainstorm as that person. This technique removes all fear and lets you look at the problem from an entirely new perspective. How would Steve Jobs have tackled the issue at hand? Or Jay Z? Or Ursula the Sea Witch? RoleStorming is one of the most productive (and fun) approaches to generating amazing ideas!

2 The Bad Idea – With so much pressure to discover the perfect idea, we can easily get stuck. Here, try a brainstorming round looking for the worst ideas to your problem instead of the best. Make a list of every horrible, illegal, immoral, unethical or just plain lousy idea you can think of. After you've exhausted the bad ideas, do a second round where you try to flip the bad concepts into good ones. The horrible ideas will push your creativity into uncharted territory. Then, it's just a matter of adjusting the bad ones into great ones to unlock breakthroughs.

3 Substitution – Removing sugar and replacing it with artificial sweetener led to the diet soda explosion. Subbing out cramped seating for more room led to first-class air travel. Changing the payment model from individual razor blade sales at retail stores to an online subscription allowed Dollar Shave Club to upend a mature industry. In this technique, examine your current approach and tinker with the individual elements. Explore substituting different approaches and ingredients with new ones to discover a fresh path forward.

The clouds will eventually clear and there will be sunny days ahead. In the meantime, let's proceed thoughtfully . . . one 20-foot stretch at a time.

– Josh Linkner

4 Crazy 8s – This technique pushes your creativity and removes executional concerns by making you visualize and draw your ideas. First, draw an empty comic strip grid that is four squares wide and two squares tall. Next, draw eight different ideas, one in each square, in eight minutes. Stick figures are fine; you don't have to be Picasso here. The process of drawing your ideas without time to overanalyze them is a powerful way to tap into raw creativity and get the ideas flowing.

5 Slither – Imagine your ideal competitor, even more powerful than the real-world existing ones. Let's call them "Slither." These guys have the best people, funding, clients, ideas, equipment and access. They are your made-up nemesis. Fictitious industry leaders. The company that never makes a mistake or misses a number. Now, imagine that you worked at this idyllic organization and were brainstorming on the same problem or opportunity that's currently vexing you. What ideas would Slither invent? By projecting into the minds of your ideal competitor, you remove fear and executional obstacles, freeing your creative mind from distraction and allowing you to stretch your imagination to new heights.

6 The Judo Flip – First, make a list of all the traditional ways you'd tackle the challenges you're working on. How have you always done it before? How do industry veterans approach this? What is conventional wisdom? Next, draw a line down the page and on the other side of this magic line, write out the polar opposite approach to each of the traditional ones. If you sell cars and want to maximize profits, for example, you might Judo Flip painful customer negotiations with no-haggle pricing.

If everyone else sells haircuts one at a time, your salon could Judo Flip into a monthly subscription for unlimited cuts. Pushing yourself to explore the exact opposite of existing approaches will awaken your creative genius.

7 Most Ideas Contest – Here, it's a race for quantity instead of quality. Break into small teams and set a timer for 15 minutes. Offer up a small prize to the team that can generate the most ideas in the allotted time. Competitive nature, combined with a focus on quantity, ends up liberating the imagination. At the end of the sprint, you'll likely find the ideas at the end of each team's lists are the most powerful. After the obvious solutions are exhausted, the later ideas tend to be the most creative and effective. In other words, quantity actually drives quality.

8 The World's First – In this exercise, you're only allowed to share ideas that begin with "the world's first." It could be the world's first insurance policy for drones. Or the world's first 3D-printed burger joint. What about the world's first hotel that offers guests a warm chocolate chip cookie upon arrival? You may know that's exactly what the DoubleTree Hotel did, and that simple idea is credited for much of their differentiated success.

If some of these techniques feel odd to you, you're on the right track. They are specifically engineered to push you out of your normal comfort zone into that incredible region of your mind that creates artistry. If you want to tap into a vast reservoir of creative capacity and discover legendary ideas, take these non-traditional approaches for a spin. Your creative genius awaits. ■

Persuasive Marketing Offers at Each Stage of the Buyer's Journey



Easy to explain and quickly understood. The job of your direct marketing offer is to motivate someone to take an action now.

Depending upon where they are on the journey that leads to a purchase, different types of offers will hit the right people at the right time when they are at the top of the sales funnel (awareness), the middle (evaluation) or the bottom (ready to buy).

Early on, people typically look at a variety of potential solutions to their problem or need. Opinions from trusted sources and research data are two ways for them to become more knowledgeable business buyers. At the evaluation

stage, content that further explains the unique benefits of your product or service is appropriate to build credibility. And the final “push” that triggers a purchase may be a business consultation, or a coupon for consumers.

While there are plenty of variables based on industry and audience, a strong appeal typically has three features:

- High perceived value to the recipient
- An innate ability to qualify a prospect
- Is relatively low risk and low cost to the marketer

An effective offer is delivered with a sense of urgency, created by limiting the time or the number available for redemption. Here are a few tried-and-true offers to consider for your next direct marketing campaign:

TOP 5 BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS OFFERS

1 FREE INFORMATION

Question: What knowledge is sought universally?
Answer: How to do a job better, solve a business problem, or save time or money. Educational content like whitepapers, checklists and eBooks are considered some of the most effective offers at the awareness stage.

2 DEMONSTRATION VIDEOS

Seeing is believing! Anticipating and answering specific questions about your solutions visually is especially relevant for products like business equipment and technology when your buyer is close to purchase.

3 MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE

A powerful way to incentivize purchase is by removing financial risk. It also helps you to move away from competing on price and shift the focus to confidence in your quality and service.

4 FREE NEEDS ANALYSIS

Typically used by service industries, surveys or analyses are great conversation-starters that can uncover new, broader sales opportunities that are missed in transactional sales.

5 FREE TRIAL

At the purchase stage, a risk-free period for higher-priced products or services can remove hesitancy and open the door to valuable customer feedback that can lead to product enhancements.

TOP 5 BUSINESS-TO-CONSUMER OFFERS

1 FREE SAMPLE

Everybody likes to get something for nothing. Introduce a product to a new audience and encourage repeat sales from among the converted by using samples paired with a coupon offer.

2 CUSTOMER APPRECIATION SALE

Reward loyalty with special deals exclusive to current customers, or win back dormant buyers with “We’ve Missed You!” appeals.

3 TRADE-IN INCENTIVE

Offering reduced pricing with a new purchase when you trade in the old prevents customer defection to a competitor.

4 SEASONAL SALE

Tied to a time-limited sales period, seasonal promotions can be used to drive sales during otherwise off-peak periods or help you move inventory.

5 SPECIAL TERMS

Bill me later, low or no interest, or payment installments all ease the decision to purchase when consumers want more control of their spending and the perception of a “good deal.”

Pro Tip: Your offer is a key element of your direct marketing campaign. Even more critical is your target data. Need help with pulling together all the pieces of a successful strategy? Let us know; we are here to help. ■

TREND WATCH: Safety and More in Promotional Products



Antimicrobial pens to minimize the risk of sharing. Touchless utility keys for opening doors without direct contact. Non-slip extenders to keep facemasks comfortably in place.

Promotional products providers have quickly adapted to today's changing needs and preferences with items that are both useful and encourage the best practices recommended by health care professionals. If you are looking for a welcomed way to show that you put the well-being of your employees, customers, prospects and supporters first, there's no better way than with one of these safety-related items.

Throughout a year, marketers rely on the variety and affordability of branded promo products to keep their company name in front of their most important audiences. Seasoned direct mail marketers know that dimensional or "lumpy" mail including a promotional gift that is both functional and fun can supercharge a targeted campaign and drive better response.

While health and safety are likely to remain top of mind for some time to come, here are a few perennial favorites and newcomers to give you ideas for your gifts and giveaways:

Popular Electronics – Do you have a new remote workforce? Here are neat ways to treat your team. Wireless earbuds and speakers, webcam covers, and cell phone stands join USB drives and mobile power banks as some of the handiest gadgets going.

Going Green – Journal books with recycled paper are appreciated by all who value sustainable solutions. Biodegradable and bamboo pens, wheat boxes and stainless steel drinking straws are delightful and eco-friendly.

Thirst Quenchers – Collapsible silicone water bottles and coffee cups are space-savers and conveniently packable. Along with travel mugs, insulated tumblers, coasters and can coolers, your brand and logo can always be close at hand.

Minis to the Max – Stickers, patches and pins with inspirational messages alongside your logo are small but mighty branding tools when they are displayed on personal belongings. Cellphone socket grips, pouches and holsters also keep your brand in hand.

Cool Calendars – Promotional calendars continue to have lasting appeal in the workplace and at home. Kick it up a notch with variable images and text that makes each wall or desk calendar unique to the person who receives it. ■



Our promo products professionals are here for you! Let us take the worry out of what to choose and give you some options to fit your budget and goals.

Get the Word Out to Your Customers and Community



With so much change and rolling dates for reopening, even your best customers or visitors may be unsure if you're there. Here are a few ways we can help you share your message:

Signs, Banners and Displays

Alert drive-by and pedestrian traffic that you are open with A-frames and sidewalk stands, vinyl banners, flutter flags and window decals. Welcome visitors or display your new hours of operation through signs and window graphics.

Direct Mail and Flyers

Tap into the power of print. Direct mail is a proven channel for local marketers. Ask us about inexpensive postcard mailings that can blanket the areas around your business with your reopening message and special offers. There is no cheaper way to get more valuable coverage! See us for other printed formats like flyers, door hangers and foldover mailers.



Vehicle Graphics

Turn your vehicle into a rolling billboard that is at work for you nearly 24/7. We can help with temporary clings for "We're Open for Business" special offers or promoting your "Virtual Consultations and Estimates." You can reposition or simply remove custom graphics and lettering when it's time to update your message.

eCommerce Solutions

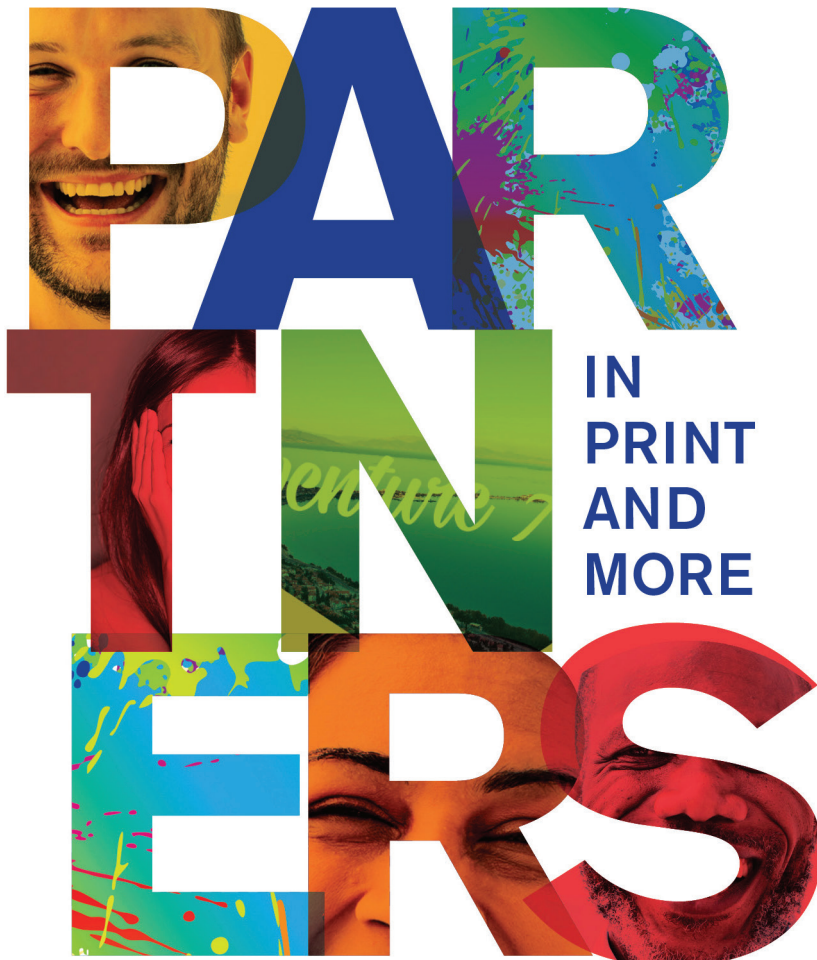
There has never been a better time for an online ordering system that allows you to streamline the ordering and management of marketing materials and business forms – all on a convenient, customizable and user-friendly website. You save time and money while gaining better control of your brand consistency and expenses.

Tokens of Appreciation

Even as your business reopens, it's going to take time for some customers to feel comfortable and return to some of their typical buying routines. We will need to be patient, but we can also show our appreciation for their patronage (whether in-person or online) through small tokens, like a useful branded product or a handwritten thank-you note.

**Looking for more fresh ideas?
Contact us to learn more.**

Allegra businesses are independently owned and operated.



**IN
PRINT
AND
MORE**

Printing has gone far beyond putting ink on paper.

Today, there are many ways to:

- Reduce printing costs
- Increase impact
- Motivate response
- Extend the life of your print materials

Talk to our friendly and knowledgeable professionals for the latest in high-impact print campaigns, signs and banners, and powerful integration with your web marketing.

CONTACT US TODAY!