

DM NEWS

DIRECT MARKETING...HEY IT'S ALL ABOUT PEOPLE.

Eleven things I've learned about people and how to make them really want to do business with you.

By Gene BeHage

OBSERVATIONS:

People make buying decisions not companies.

Direct marketing that moves people moves product.

We've got our demographics, psychographics, statistical modeling, Z1P analysis, name segmentation and all the facts and figures that tell us about segments, groups, and tendencies. But do we really know the folks that make up these segments and statistics? Do we know the subjective traits about them? Are we positioned in their lives as someone that knows them and, that they like doing business with? I've found some direct marketers and retailers do know about their customers...most don't. "Know thy customer" is the #1 commandment of direct marketing. It goes beyond the statistics etc. Its ingrained in copy, creative, product catalogs, direct mail offers...everything! Bottom line, the more you know about them the better your R.O.I. will be. Here's what I learned about people:

#1 Change... the majority of folks do not embrace change with open arms. There's comfort in sameness. When you offer a new product or offer, you have to make the customer comfortable with it by taking away all barriers that they could possibly say "no" to...No money, need, hurry desire or trust.

#2 Folks will become an advocate of your company if they believe in what you say. If your company can stake a credible product and overall

leadership position within your marketing arena, folks will sign on to your team and products. They also will dump you in a heartbeat when you show a lack of trust or inconsistency.

#3 Likes attract likes. People are comfortable with other people that share the same interests, lifestyles and needs. If your company legitimately comes across as appealing to their lifestyle with products or services, they will reward you with an order.

#4 I'll do it tomorrow...I'll exercise later...why take the stairs when we can use the escalator? We are a lazy lot! The same holds true for the folks we try to entice with our direct marketing efforts. They do not want to jump through hoops or have roadblocks in the way to buying your product. Make it simple, easy and fun for them and they will reward you.

#5 Hey I don't have time for that...just give me the executive summary...bottom line it for me. We live in a 24/7 world with 25/8 things to do and accomplish. Time, we just don't have enough of it. The same holds true for all those folks your trying to get to buy your product or service. We have become an information byte world with no time. Today folks glance at offers and ask what's in it for

me? How will it improve my life, looks, health or sex appeal? If your direct mail offer, media ad, or electronic message does not bring instant gratification it will be doomed to the circular file, grab them in the headline.

#6 Organization...we like it in our lives. There's comfort in it. We spend inordinate amounts of time and money trying to get organized personally, and in business. The same applies to direct marketing. Folks like to see order not confusion. They like to see offers that can make things simple. A checklist of how to achieve wealth...a four-step plan to better health...the formula for looking beautiful. The catalog, direct mail offers or web site has to reflect organization. Your products or services have to reflect it also in copy. Bullets, callouts, checklists and recaps are organized thoughts. People like them.

#7 People like the feeling of power and control. Some want more, some less. For the most part folks like to be in the drivers seat calling the shots. Far to many direct marketers fail to realize that yes people want control, but that they need to be "nudged" to making a decision to order. This offer ends at X date...this is your last opportunity to save...be one of the first 500 folks to order and get this free gift. Control plus a sense of urgency equals rewards for them and you.

#8 We are all hedonistic to some degree. We expect and believe that we deserve all that comes with the good



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life. What's in it for me? What will it do for me? What about me? I earned it I deserve it! The same hedonistic belief dwells in the minds of your potential customer. It's your job to answer these questions and tell them convincingly how your product or service will benefit them how it will give them more of the good life. How it will make them more beautiful, sexier, healthier, richer, or life easier. If you fail to answer the "what's in it for me question" expect your P & L to run red.

#9 People are cynical. Some a lot...some not so much. "I just don't believe it...what do you think I am a fool? Two people can keep a secret if one of them is dead." Direct marketing in simplistic terms is the art of extracting money from folks in exchange for goods or services. Unfortunately the business also has its share of charlatans who sell by fraud and deception. The consumer has been taught to be cynical.... To post the guard to every direct marketing offer. They want to trust and believe but they need comfort. It is the undaunting task of every direct marketer to prove to potential customers that you are the real deal. Trust, credibility, and honesty are subjective concerns that have to be positively addressed. "Will I get my money back if I'm not happy? Does your product do what you say it does? How long have you been around, and how do I know I can trust you? If you don't overtly address these concerns up front, don't plan for lots of orders on the backend.

#10 We are an inquisitive species. We always have questions about everything. That's an admirable quality, but not when it comes to the direct mail offer. I continue to be amazed at how many direct marketers leave questions (roadblocks to ordering) in the consumer's mind. Committing to and

placing an order is a leap of faith on the customer's part. If it's not clear on how to order, when they can call, a clear guarantee, or clear copy or pricing, anticipate questionable R.O.I. Really look at your offer and answer the questions before it mails so you won't be questioning its low response.

#11 We all want to be wanted. Clothing, fragrances, music, cars, and whole lot more is out there to boost us up the scale of being wanted or desired. The same holds true for current and potential customers. They want to be sought after. They want to know that we need them and we genuinely appreciate their business. There's nothing wrong with asking for an order...folks like it...it makes them feel wanted.

The point of all this is? Quite simply to get back to realizing that we're in the people business. If your customers went away for good would you have a business...would you have a job? Today it's absolutely critical to know the people that pay the bills, the payrolls, and bankroll your future. They are your customers. They have desires, fears, needs, and wishes. Embrace them and weave your marketing and advertising strategies around them for they are the emperors and you are the servant. Position yourself in every aspect to fulfill their needs and desires and you'll take marketshare from your competitors...Guaranteed.

SO WHAT IS IT I CAN DO FOR YOU?

To put you on the same page with the people you work for...your customers. Do you have well thought out marketing and advertising strategies that really focus on people? Are your direct mail offers, and catalogs truly positioned toward the specific group of people your offer is intended for? Does your copy and creative talk to them? Could your catalogs, PIP's, or direct mail offers use a boost in response?

Direct marketing is attention to detail. It's a long hard road strewn with boulders, potholes, and other nasty obstacles. After three decades of being in the direct marketing business I've learned how to smooth out the road. I've done it for some of the largest (and smallest) direct marketing companies in the country. I've tuned around sales that were headed south, and made millions for direct marketers in the U.S. and in Europe. Can I help you? There's a good chance that I can...let's talk. Hey there's no harm in a chat and there's absolutely no obligation...remember success is relative. How you achieve it isn't.