

Targeting Titles

I was standing near the lobby bar at the InterContinental Hotel in Chicago on October 4th, minding my own business and trying to stay out of trouble, when I was set upon by a small group of quick printers. It was no surprise to find them there, of course, since the InterContinental was the site of PrintImage International's 2002 Owners Conference—and since certain quick printers have been known to hang around in bars wherever a PrintImage event might be. (That's not a criticism of any of those quick printers, by the way, because the socializing and networking is a big part of the value that PrintImage offers. The more formal sharing of knowledge is another big part. More on that follows.)

The topic on this group's mind, it seems, was marketing for new business—and more specifically, what sort of companies they should target in their marketing efforts. "Yo, Fellman," said one of them. "Get over here and share your brains with us. We might even take up a collection and buy you a drink!"

Now seriously, how could I turn down an invitation like that?

Mailing List Issues

These printers had been discussing mailing lists, and bemoaning the fact that no one seems to have developed the perfect set of search criteria for identifying high-volume printing customers. One limited his search to companies with more than 10 employees, or more than \$1,000,000 in sales. He was mailing to a list of nearly 1500 companies, and he couldn't point to one new customer gained from that mailing program. Another noted that his biggest customer was a relatively new company with only four employees. "If I used that 'ten or a million' criteria," he said, "I never would have found my biggest customer. They wouldn't qualify in either employee count or sales volume, yet they'll spend almost \$40,000 with me this year!"

I reminded the group of something I've written about. Employee count and sales volume are certainly "indicators" to some degree, but they're far from categorical proof of high-volume printing requirements. A better indicator, I told them, is an evaluation of what the company sells, and how many people they're trying to sell it to. By considering the Product Factor (how many different products they sell), you'll gain some idea of how many different printed pieces they're likely to need, since pretty much every product in existence requires some printing to help sell it, or to support the sale in some way. By considering the Market Factor (how many people they're trying to sell their products to), you'll gain some idea of their run lengths. The ideal prospect, I said, has a high Product Factor and a low Market Factor.

"Wait, that doesn't sound right," said one of the printers. "Don't we want people with high Product Factors and *high* Market Factors? They're the ones would buy the highest volume of printing."

"That's true," I said, "but a lot of their volume wouldn't do you any good. Remember, your niche is short run printing. Long-run buyers are going to buy from printers whose equipment is better suited to their run lengths."

Direct Mail Limitations

During the course of our conversation, I reminded these printers of something else I've written about—the limitations of direct mail as a marketing tool. Yes, direct mail can definitely help you to keep your name in front of your customers, but it has real limitations in terms of being able to bring in new customers all by itself. You can overcome some of those limitations by designing your mailers as lead-generators, or even order-generators, but most of the direct mail in the printing industry is purely informational...at best! There's no "call to action," which is the most important component of effective direct marketing.

The printer mentioned earlier is a classic example of this. The mailer he's been sending out is nothing more than a joke sheet. Sure, people probably enjoy reading it, and it does keep his name in front of his current customers. But it isn't helping him to develop new customers, and that's what he says he's really trying to accomplish.

Market To People, Not Companies!

Another of the points I stressed that evening is that you'll get far better results if you market to people, not to companies. No matter what set of criteria you use to target the companies, you're unlikely to get very far if you're not marketing to the specific person (or people) within those companies who buy what you're trying to sell! It's a pretty well established fact that most mail addressed to "occupant" gets thrown away, and "Please Route To The Printing Buyer" is not much more effective. If you want to be more successful in your direct marketing efforts, get the name of the person you're trying to sell to!

How do you do that? It's really pretty simple. Call every company on your mailing list and say something like this to whoever answers the phone: "Hi, my name is (first name and last name) from (your company name), and we want to send some information about our company through the mail to your company. Can you tell me who exactly we should be sending it to? Who's the person most involved in buying printing for your company?"

I'll grant you that this will be time consuming, but that's really not the issue. The issue is that it's necessary! This is the only way I know of to develop a high-quality mailing list for a quick/digital/small commercial printing company. Let's also consider that this is not something that really has to be completed by tomorrow. For the sake of discussion, let's say that you have 1500 companies on your mailing list, and four people—including yourself—who can be assigned to work on this project. If each of those people makes 25 calls each week, in 15 weeks you'll have a much-improved marketing database.

The Importance Of Titles

Let's add something to the "script" I just suggested. After you get a name, ask what that person's title is. The title will tell you a lot about whether you've been given the right name, and if not, some "suggestive selling" might be in order.

Let's say that you're still a typical "70's-80's-90's" quick printer—and there's nothing intrinsically wrong with that! Your "product line" is still heavily oriented toward letterhead, envelopes, carbonless forms, etc., and when you ask about the title of the person whose name you've been given, you're told that she's a Technical Publications Specialist. Does that sound like the person who buys letterhead, envelopes and carbonless forms? In that situation, I might say "You know, the kind of printer we are, I usually find that it's the Office Manager who wants to talk to me, not any sort of technical specialist." The answer you may get is "Oh I'm sorry. Then you want to talk to Mary Smith. I guess we get so many calls from 'high-tech' printers that I naturally assumed that you were one of them!"

Correspondingly, if you're the kind of printer who wants to sell to a Technical Publications Specialist—or a Marketing or Purchasing or Human Resources Manager—and they give you the name of the office manager, you have to probe a little further to get a name that will do you any good!

Who Buys What?

I think it's worth considering what "titles" buy what sort of printing. Here's an admittedly sketchy list I've put together. Please give some thought to adding to it:

- **Office Managers** buy letterhead, envelopes, business cards, carbonless forms and other types of "basic" one and two-color printing. In medical offices in particular, the Office Manager is probably the key contact for any printing.
- **Human Resources Titles** (manager, specialist, assistant) buy application sets and employee manuals.
- **Marketing Titles** (manager, specialist, assistant) buy everything from stationery items to high-color promotional printing, sometimes including product manuals and large format signage and point-of-purchase materials, and making them one of the best possible titles for printers with full-color capabilities.
- **Technical Titles** (manager, editor, writer, specialist) buy technical manuals, making them one of the best possible titles for digital printers.
- **Purchasing Titles** (manager, agent) might buy any kind of printing—but remember that purchasing titles tend to be the most price-oriented of all buyers!
- **Executive Titles** (owner, president, vice-president) might also buy any kind of printing. In a small company, these are good titles for you, but in a large company, you may have trouble getting the attention of such high-ranking executives and be better off looking for an initial contact at a lower level.

As you consider these titles, let's also consider something else that I wrote about recently: the difference between decision-makers and money-spenders. It may very well be that an Office Manager—or even a secretary or receptionist—places orders for printing, but that person is not empowered to make the decision to change printers. With current customers, that money-spender may be your most important contact, but when you're trying to develop new customers, you have to be talking to the decision-maker!

List and Offer

Direct marketing experts will tell you that the two most important factors for success are your list and your offer. In other words, you have to be marketing to the right people with an offer they're likely to be interested in! So let's think about that in terms of our discussion about the importance of titles.

Let's say that you have a mailing list that breaks down into 30% Office Managers, 5% Human Resources titles, 25% Marketing titles, 5% Technical titles, 25% Purchasing titles and 10% Executive titles. Now let's say that

you're planning a mailer that focuses on your 4-color printing capabilities. When you consider what each title category buys, does it seem likely that the Office Managers and the Human Resources and Technical titles are really likely to care? That's 40% of your mailing list, and to me, it makes good sense to develop another mailer for those titles rather than sending them something they might look at, but they're unlikely to ever buy what you're telling them about!

I guess the bottom line here is that marketing can be/should be a pretty sophisticated discipline, but most quick/digital/small commercial printers are not very sophisticated about it. That's the line I used in Chicago, anyway, and it seemed to work for the printers I was talking to.