

The background of the slide is a close-up, angled view of a computer keyboard. The keys are illuminated with a blue light. Overlaid on the keyboard is a pattern of white binary code (0s and 1s) that appears to be floating or glowing. The overall color scheme is dark blue and black, with the white binary code providing a strong contrast.

Connecting the Physical to the Digital

3 Ways to Integrate Your Website with Your Direct Mail Marketing

THERE IS POWER IN NUMBERS

One of the greatest limitations of direct mail marketing is that you can only provide as much information as the size of your document will allow. With the web, there is no limitation to the amount of content on a page or even the number of pages generated. In fact, there's essentially no costs to publish content to the web other than fees associated with a hosting account.

With the explosive growth of the Internet and the wide availability of access it has almost become a requirement for businesses to have a website. Consumers have more power than ever to research companies, products, and services to find the right solution to their needs and studies have shown that more often than not the web is where they start their search or at least where they get their final answers before making a purchasing decision.

On the other hand, direct mail is a marketing technique businesses use to attempt to get their solutions directly in front of the eyes of potential customers before they even start looking. Businesses use demographics, psychographics, and other data to refine a list of prospects that they feel would be interested in their offerings. Once compiled, the mail piece is designed, printed, labeled, dropped into the mail circulation, and is delivered to the prospect's door. Once delivered, businesses then just have to sit and wait for some sort of response... or do they?

Integrating your direct mail campaigns with your website can provide prospects with immediate paths to engage your business. No more waiting for them to call. No more forcing them to cut coupons. Just simple paths guide prospects from the printed document in front of them to the digital web where they can get all the answers they need, from you, to make their buying decision and engage your business.

This document's aim is to show you 3 ways you can integrate your website with your direct mail campaigns to improve customer response.

1. CUSTOM URL DIRECTS VISITORS TO A SPECIAL WEB PAGE

Have you ever looked closely at a direct mail piece that ended up in your mailbox? Did you ever notice that most of them now include the address to their website? Have you ever visited the website after viewing the advertisement?

The 2007 Multi-Channel Direct Mail Study by comScore highlighted that 67% of prospects who received direct mail and printed catalogs were persuaded to visit company websites.

Imagine that, 67% of your targeted list will potentially make your website their next step. Now, a large percentage of direct mail pieces include nothing more than a link to the home page of the advertiser's website when the ad piece itself was about a particular topic, whether it be the product or service. So why not make it easy for a prospect to learn more about that topic by providing them with a custom web address that leads them to a specialized web page providing additional information from the ad content. Sending them to your home page requires that they hunt for the information that they desired to review next. This special web page, called a "landing page," is intended to provide exactly what they are looking for.

What is a Landing Page?

A landing page is a specialized web page that is designed to be highly relevant to the visitor about a particular topic. The content is extremely focused on the topic and is typically loaded with simple but effective calls-to-action. These pages can have multiple goals including: providing additional information not given in the direct mail piece, capturing customer data for use in future targeted email or direct mail campaigns, or possibly persuading the visitor to complete a purchase or other designated transaction.



How to Get Started

Creating your first landing page is very simple and can be completed and available for use in as little as a few hours. Only three simple items are required to get your landing page setup:

- » **Content:** Remember, the content should be highly focused on the key topic you are presenting (ex. Information about your product, service, or other offering.)
- » **HTML Web File:** Using a web page editor or your web development provider, create a stylized design that reinforces the content and convert it into a formatted HTML web document.
- » **Hosting Account:** If you already have a website, it is likely that you have available space to post the web file to your hosting account. You should contact your hosting provider if you need assistance.

If you do not have a website, you will need to acquire hosting services to post your landing page to the web. We'd recommend GoDaddy.com where we have secured a 10% Off hosting services coupon which you can access here by [clicking here](#).

2. PROVIDE A COUPON CODE THAT CAN BE CAPTURED ON YOUR WEBSITE

Another method of integrating your direct mail pieces with your website involves the use of coupon codes. Though coupon codes have been highly utilized by online retailers, these simple pieces of data can provide you with an effective means to persuade a prospect to quickly engage your company, even if you do not sell anything online.

According to the Direct Marketing Association, close to 33% of consumers go online to respond to direct mail.

With that percentage actually visiting your website to provide you some type of response, wouldn't you want to guide them to give the response you desire? While providing a coupon code in your direct mail piece is nothing new, making it so that your potential customers can immediately take advantage of that special offering is.

Think about it this way:

A prospect receives a direct mail piece with the standard cut-and-return coupon. The customer sees the expiration date and figures "maybe" they'll use it before then. Time goes by, the potential for the sale decreases, and the likelihood of remembrance is well... not likely.

OR

A prospect receives a direct mail piece with a coupon that could be cut-out OR can immediately be utilized by going to the company website, inputting the code with some contact information, and the prospect gets an immediate response (maybe they get something for free, maybe the discount is higher for being quickly used, or you just send them a "Thank you! A representative will contact you within 24 hours.") The point is that providing a means to immediately utilize the coupon helps to remove one of the largest barriers to the sale, is it convenient? If it is as easy as going to www.yourcompany.com and inputting a code to get that great deal, then it potentially skips the "waiting period."

How to Get Started

Setting up a coupon system is very easy and may already be available with your web software if you have an ecommerce-enabled website. If so, simply review your provider's guides on how to utilize coupon codes. If not, follow these simple guidelines:

- » Create a simple spreadsheet where you create a code (any number of letters and numbers) that is associated with a specific offering.
- » Create a web contact form that captures relevant data from the prospect or use a contact form you are already using on your website by following the next step.
- » At the end of that form before the "Submit" button, provide a field that the prospect can enter the coupon code found on the direct mail piece and ensure your form processor will include this data when processing.
- » When the form is submitted, you should receive the prospect's contact information, PLUS the coupon code. Simply reference the spreadsheet to see what offering the submission was for and fulfill the request. You could also automate this process, but that is beyond the scope of this guide.

3. PROVIDE SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS AS ALTERNATIVE CONNECTION POINTS

Now this may not seem like a direct integration between your direct mail pieces and your website and that would actually be correct, however, sharing with your respondents how they can connect to you in other forms can and in fact will lead to traffic back to your website.

How? Well, as long as you have posted a link in your social media profiles to your website, then those respondents who connect to you will follow that link back to your site to learn more about who you are.

Why would respondents want to connect to me this way?

There's a simple answer to that question: we all would rather connect to a business the way WE want to connect rather than the way THEY want us to connect. Trust us, the same is true of your customers. Providing them with multiple ways that they can engage and stay engaged with your business online provides multiple avenues of influence where you can have a constant "touch point" with your customers. You can then use these paths to pass-along valuable information, alerts, notices, and promotions that can in turn pull traffic back to your website to complete a transaction. Give it a try and you'll see how linking your direct mail pieces through the web can prove very beneficial.

How to Get Started

Creating this sort of indirect connection will require that you have an active account with either one or many social media applications such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter, and the like. Once those accounts are created, complete the following:

- » Be sure to complete your profile and enter your website address into your profile. This will be the main integration point that will pass traffic from the social media tool to your website.
- » Decide what you will post in your social media accounts and start populating them with information. For instance, you could post announcements, coupons, links to valuable articles, upcoming events, etc.
- » Send a notice to your current customers about your new social media accounts to get a few of them connected. This will help show a non-empty account when a respondent from your direct mail piece visits.
- » Finally, include URL's to your social media accounts on your direct mail pieces. Some services such as Facebook allow you to have a customized URL such as <http://www.facebook.com/yourbusiness>. You will want to create this URL and use it as your link to these services instead of the default, which can be long and include random letters and numbers.

BRINGING YOUR PROSPECTS THROUGH A PROCESS

Let us be honest with you, the actual benefit of connecting your direct mail pieces and your website is not just so you can pass a prospect from one marketing channel to another to flood them with information and sales pitches. The benefit is actually two fold and it benefits both you and your prospects.

1. It gives your prospects more of what they want: information and/or access to engage your business on their terms all in a nice and neat process.
2. It gives you a simple process to capture and engage your prospects providing greater opportunity to persuade them to convert into a customer.

Implementing these optional solutions is not too difficult that it could not be completed in-house or even by a business owner themselves, and the average professional web development firm could assist you in these endeavors as well.

The point isn't that they can be done, it's that they should be done to further the success of your direct mail marketing initiatives.

To your success!



About the Authors

Brian Hamlett is the Founder and President of mPower Consulting, a strategic marketing firm who's aim is to "make the web easy" for businesses and organizations. Their emphasis on educating clients in the tools and techniques has laid the foundation for successful growth at over 30 organizations from innovative start-ups to 10 year old family businesses to top Fortune 5000 businesses.

Learn more at www.mpoweringu.com

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