



The e-marketing vs direct mail debate

Both e-marketing and direct mail have an important role to play in the marketing mix, and both should be considered for their relevance and potential results.

The critical decision to decide which (or both) routes to use comes from doing good primary research: targeting of prospects & handling data, understanding the messages to communicate and developing robust tracking tools to measure response.

The design and copy are important to deliver a communication that achieves maximum exposure and drives response.

Some benefits of e-marketing:



It allows you to quickly and easily approach a highly targeted group of individuals.

You can locate prospects based on interests, shared demographics, lifestyle indicators.

It delivers an immediate response. it is relatively easy to set-up and manage campaigns.

Personalisation of the message is easy.

Campaigns are highly trackable and generate visible leads.

You can legally manage un-subscribes.

It is cost effective and ideal for CRM.

Response rates can be very high.

It is easily forwarded (viral marketing).

You can link directly to other marketing media such as websites.

You can include multiple messages or "snippets" of messages.

However it has inherent weaknesses:



Open rates (reading the email!) are often low – creative design must be very engaging.

It has poor longevity and is not often kept for future reference.

It can be regarded as spam if not targeted, relevant & done legally.

Email addresses bounce back frequently due to word filters & incorrect addresses.

Databases contain only a small % of all potential target individuals / businesses.



Direct mail has a role to play, specifically when targeting large businesses, as it facilitates more options to make an impact and engage with people.

Some benefits of direct mail are:



It has longevity (kept on the desk, drawer etc)

It has more formatting, size, texture and shape options

There is a greater opportunity to have high impact and stand out from the crowd

It can be passed from person to person

There is more scope for presentation of detailed information

It can be highly personalised and is generally more “personable”

It appeals to people who like to hold something tactile, rather than read an email

It can include high impact incentives and reply paid mechanisms for response

The disadvantages of direct mail are that:



It needs to have very strong calls to action and tracking options.

Measuring results is very hard as it is typically a “yes” decision or nothing (black or white). There is very little scope for tracking “warm / grey” prospects.

Postage costs can be high.

It is often a complex project – database, design, printing, packing, distribution.

Consumers typically do not appreciate “prospecting” direct mail but it is more acceptable for businesses.



Marketing-Doctor recommends:

Use a knowledgeable database marketing expert to research databases available and buy/use data to avoid wastage and poor targeting. It’s a minefield for novices to navigate!

Take small bites - test small segments of different markets with different messages and creative designs, to see where response is good. This maximises the use of budgets and allows you to quickly optimise your marketing.

Always consider tracking mechanisms so you can measure response, on direct mail and e-marketing campaigns.

Think out of the box – stand out from the competition!

Personalise, personalise, personalise – understand and get closer to your prospects and your clients to make your marketing relevant.

