

Millennials are Big on Traditional Direct Mail Marketing After All



Life is funny. Just when you think old technology is gone forever, younger people discover it and bring it back.

In a time when a smart phone and a palm-sized Wi-Fi speaker can fill a home with digitally enhanced music, a growing swath of Americans search classified ads, estate sales, and vintage record stores for vinyl LPs (that's "long-playing" for you Millennials).

Why? There's charm in handling and reading an album cover, taking in the iconic art. Fans of the old technology also enjoy the tactile experience of pulling the album from its sleeve and placing it on a turntable. In addition to the charm, audiophiles will tell you that a needle sliding along a vinyl groove produces a clearer sound – in a way digital devices never can.

A parallel can be made between digital content and printed text.

Just as older people are portrayed as digitally challenged, Millennials are thought to be digitally dependent, unable to interact with a pen and paper and dismissive of printed material. Such generalizations do no good in the world of marketing, where studies show most Millennials prefer printed marketing material over digital advertising.

Millennials learning the traditional ways

It's true that Millennials, defined as between 18 and 34 years old (born since the Internet's inception) move fluidly among digital social media platforms and download, send and manipulate data files like no one's business. But it's not accurate to say that Millennials eschew paper and printed material.

In fact, the *Boston Globe* reports that Millennials are acting like people in search of vinyl records. Retailers in cities such as Boston are witnessing a surge in day planner purchases by young professionals and seeing more young people taking calligraphy classes and learning long hand penmanship so they can master "old-fashioned" letter writing. The Greeting Card Association goes as far as to say Millennials are more likely to purchase a greeting card for friends and loved ones than baby boomers are.

Numerous other polls and studies show that it is never a good idea to rely only on digital ads to get a response from 18 - 34 year olds.

Our Town America: Millennials respond to direct mail

Our Town America, a leader in direct mail marketing for more than four decades, knows that Millennials do respond to printed postcards and other direct marketing pieces the mail carrier leaves in their mailbox. Because so many of us, especially Millennials, suffer from digital overload - from emails, pop-up ads, marketing texts, tweets, and robo-calls to their smart phones - handling regular mail is a welcomed break.

Our Town America's experience shows that direct mail marketing campaigns are just as effective at reaching young people as they are at reaching older Americans. Traditional direct marketing is still very effective when the marketing message is strong, incites action and reaches the right audience.

Studies show millennials prefer printed marketing

Here are more great stats that show Millennials respond to traditional direct mail marketing.

- Forbes' poll found that millennials lead other generations in reading and still generally prefer print books to e-books

- According to a Gallup Poll, 95 percent of 18 – 29 year olds like receiving personal mail.
- Gallup says millennials like the tactile experience of holding the marketing piece and reading it.
- According to Divvy Online, 90 percent of people 25 to 34 years old find direct mail marketing reliable, and 87 percent enjoy receiving it.
- Millennials say they trust the information they receive in the mail over other media. Specifically, 82 percent of millennials view messages printed on paper as more trustworthy than digital messages, Divvy Online says.
- It seems millennials don't necessarily like digital ads or Internet coupons – nearly half of millennials say they ignore them, Quad/Graphics found.
- In 2014, 28.9 million millennials made a purchase from a paper catalog, indicating their focus on printed marketing materials, Quad/Graphics
- 75 percent of millennials say direct mail is valuable, National Mortgage Professional.com says.

These statistics are good news for companies that plan to market their businesses using traditional direct mail pieces such as **postcards**, tri-folds, and oversized envelopes such as **Our Town America's new mover Welcome Package**. Judging by their success, it certainly appears that paper and ink aren't 'going away' any time soon, in spite of emerging technologies

Remember: Direct marketing programs don't have to be one or the other. Combining traditional direct mail with digital marketing creates a powerful one-two punch that can reach potential customers of all ages.

Instead of avoiding specific forms of communication for marketing, wouldn't it make sense to combine the best of both?

After all, the more things change, the more they stay the same.