

The Ultimate Marketing Survival Guide for 2009, and Beyond!



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Introduction

This Survival Guide was originally published in October of 2008 in our Direct Marketing Advisor. It received an overwhelming response. We have since picked up a few more “Favorite Authors” and wanted to give them the opportunity to submit their own comments for developing campaign strategies to face key marketing challenges of 2009, and beyond. Their articles, along with the original Survival Guide authors, are now incorporated into this one document, sure to incite the marketing guru you know you have inside you. Use these words of wisdom to inspire brilliant marketing campaigns, confront economic and budget issues, tackle obstacles temporarily blocking your goal, and sustain your business for a year’s worth, and beyond, of rewarding endeavors.

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Direct mail remains the king of direct marketing

From Dean Rieck, direct mail copywriter



This has been a challenging year for direct mail. Higher costs, an uncertain economy, and shrinking budgets have made life difficult. And 2009 will probably be more of the same. However, direct mail remains the king of direct marketing. No other medium can put targeted advertising messages into more homes or businesses. My advice for 2009?

Think ROI. Sure, you should test economical formats. But while you're cutting costs, don't cut your own throat. More expensive direct mail can often create more net profit.

Hire experienced copywriters. When budgets shrink, do you cut the salary of your sales staff? Of course not. So why squeeze your copywriters? They're your sales people in the mail. In the copywriting world, you get what you pay for.

Keep mailing those controls. Who cares if you're bored with your mailers? Don't make kneejerk changes. If your mail pieces work, keep using them until they stop working. However ...

Break out of your comfort zone. That means keep testing. Try a more dramatic offer, a stronger guarantee, a new format. When you stop testing, you stop learning. Testing is how you reduce expense and increase profit.

Don't be so fussy with branding. Yes, your brand look is important. But brands are built through sales, not through color specs and typographic rules. Loosen up, especially with acquisition efforts, where a different "look" can net new customers.

Dean Rieck is a leading direct mail copywriter. For more copywriting and selling tips, sign up for Dean's FREE direct response newsletter at www.directcreative.com and get a free report, 99 Easy Ways to Boost Your Direct Mail Response. Visit Dean's Favorite Author's page at: <http://www.melissadata.com/authors>

What's in it for me?

From Valerie Kendrick, president of Kendrick Resources LLC



One of the biggest marketing challenges that will face all of us in 2009 is to answer the question "What's in it for me?" for all of our clients and customers.

We must make sure that we address their concerns, solve their problems, and stop their pain. I have always stressed we need to focus on our readers, and it will be even more important in the coming year. Ask yourself why they should care each time you set out to write some marketing copy. Then re-read your copy to make sure you have either solved the customer's problem or at least offered hope that it can be solved.

Valerie Kendrick is the president of Kendrick Resources LLC, specializing in communications skills training. She has been called the "Grammar Guru" because of her passion to help the business person communicate more effectively. Valerie can be reached at valerie@kendrickresources.com or by phone at 303-552-7349. Visit Valerie's Favorite Author's page at: <http://www.melissadata.com/authors>

Use your “Marketing Filter” to make the final decision

From Renea Myers, president of Renea Myers Marketing

As you prepare for 2009, be aware that businesses have an opportunity to increase their market share by continuing to market during a down economy. However, many of us are under pressure to increase the ROI of our marketing dollars.



Some points to consider:

- Analyze the marketing strategies and tactics that got you your best current customers. Do more of that! It's ok to sprinkle in some new ideas, but stick primarily to what you know.
- If you're not sure what works, implement a testing and tracking system for current marketing activities.
- When considering a marketing opportunity, use your “Marketing Filter” to make the final decision. The Marketing Filter is comprised of the following information: Your target audience (be specific); your core marketing message; your points of uniqueness; your brand/personality; your budget. A good marketing vehicle will allow you to effectively communicate your unique message to your target audience while staying true to your brand. It should also fit within your ongoing budget. If you can't sustain the marketing activity over a period of time, it's probably not a good decision.

Renea Myers is the president of Renea Myers Marketing. Visit her web site at www.rmyersmarketing.com. Visit Renea's Favorite Author's page at: <http://www.melissadata.com/authors>

Companies need to get busier and smarter with their marketing efforts

From Phil Dunn, marketing consultant and copywriter

Due to recession fears and real market contraction, companies are tightening their marketing budget purse strings in 2009. That means less money for direct mail, email campaigns and AdWords integrated landing pages. The opposite should be happening, however.



Companies need to get busier and smarter with their marketing efforts. The truth is companies that increase marketing and advertising budgets during economic downturns end up golden when things turn around. It's better to follow the advice of someone like Warren Buffet and get greedy when others are fearful, rather than curl up into fetal position. Think about it – Chevy crushed Ford by increasing marketing efforts during the 70's. Kellogg's pushed Post to a distant 2nd place during The Great Depression by cranking up their advertising. Stanley tools increased their ad budgets during the 70's, too, and they absolutely buried their competitors.

*Phil Dunn writes marketing materials and provides strategic consulting for Fortune 500 companies. He is also co-author of *The 7 Essential Steps to Successful eBay Marketing* (McGraw-Hill, 2005). Visit his Web site at www.qualitywriter.com Visit Phil's Favorite Author's page at Melissa Data now. <http://www.melissadata.com/authors>*

A tough economy always separates the savvy marketers from the amateurs

From Bob Martel, JMB Marketing Group



All marketing and sales people face the challenge of competing for the expendable income of their prospects and clients, and in influencing the purchase decision. This uncertain economy is forcing everyone to re-evaluate spending, adding to the challenge. The marketing function takes on a higher visibility when revenue slows, and all too often the marketing budget suffers, too. A tough economy always separates the savvy marketers from the amateurs, yet having high value products and services make the job easier.

The greatest short-term challenge I see is the increased pressure to make every precious marketing dollar count and for direct marketing programs to yield maximum results! Keep these points in mind as you refine strategies and programs for 2009:

- The quality of lists, good dm copy, and strong, irresistible offers still count! There are no shortcuts. Follow proven DM methods. Apply marketing psychology to your programs and create demand.
- Fine tune your cross-channel marketing model and messages to reflect the customer buying process. All of the sexy marketing automation tools are no substitute for a compelling value proposition.
- Use direct mail to create a personalized marketing experience and lead your prospects on-line.
- Segment, prioritize and profile your customers. Now is the time to be a very smart marketer – and ‘serving your current customers so well they wouldn’t go elsewhere’ is the best place to start.
- One overlooked marketing success factor is the internal communication and involvement of key groups. Marketing needs to support the sales effort by delivering quality leads, and customer services have to be in place to create a memorable, consistent and repeatable buying experience.

I have prepared a special report which presents 34 rock-solid reasons to write a sales letter to your existing customers. Request it at my website.

Bob Martel is the principal consultant at JMB Marketing Group. View his Web site at www.jmbmarketing.com. Email him at bobmartel@jmbmarketing.com with your comments about this article. Visit Bob’s Favorite Author page at: <http://www.melissadata.com/authors>

2009? Recession? Bah!

From Jeffrey Dobkin, copywriter, direct response specialist



Don’t give me any of your whining. I have aches and pains, too. Oh, my back hurts; oh, I have a bum knee... oh, I just dislocated my shoulder; hey, my appendix just burst... You don’t hear me complaining do you? So, someone took your handicapped sign... and now you have to walk an additional 20 feet. Tough it out, baby - and get back in the driver’s seat. I don’t think the plan really was for the meek to inherit the earth.

The Top Ten in Direct Marketing/2009 Recommendations

10. Market harder.

The additional spend of advertising and marketing dollars when others are pulling back propels you into higher visibility, way past others—to the top of the “Hi! I’m over here!” visibility peak.

9. Market Smarter.

Market with greater precision. Take precise aim at your best targets. Spend the additional time up-front, and don’t waste expense going after people on the edge who “may possibly buy if they are in the right mood and if they feel like it that day”. Dig deep. Aim for the solid targets that need your stuff.

Specific Technique: Send letters every 6 weeks to your top 100 prospects. Mailing costs: 100 x 42¢ = \$4.20 x 9 times a year = \$37.80. Best \$37.80 you can spend in marketing - guaranteed.

8. Invest in your own success.

An investment in marketing dollars at this time is worth more now than when everyone else is also in the mail, and magazines and newspapers have fat print-ad contracts. With less competition competing for your prospect’s attention, you stand more front and center.

7. Take advantage of the better deals.

For example, the pulling back of the giant media-buying machinery of the sinking automotive industry has left great media, ad-space, direct mail, and cut-sheet paper deals on the table for the rest of us. Look around. Great deals abound - find them... or

6. Negotiate...

Make your own deals. Lots of firms that were so, so Hoy Paloy and steadfast on price — now will negotiate. Go after them.

5. Don’t be afraid to call-up and make a lowball offer. You might not get it at that price, but you may wind up paying much less than list.

4. Not everyone is in a recession.

Not every industry suffers. Some industries flourish in recessionary times. Head over to them if you can. Look for those markets. “Studying the markets” has meaning outside of the traditional mumble jumble of, you know, the industry where your stocks just tanked.

3. Enjoy it.

Remember the Ford dealer that changed your oil for \$87.50 and replaced all your fan belts for \$300 when only one was necessary? He’s all moaning about no one’s buying cars, so he has to reduce his profit margin. Hey, where was the good pricing for the past 10 years - when I needed it?

And how about the home builder that made \$20 million a year for the past 10 years... and he's whining and crying like a baby with a diaper rash because he's stuck with a house inventory, and may lose money this year. Tough.

If only the phone companies, software companies, and computer hardware firms (Yes, like Verizon and HP!) would crash and burn because of their lousy service and unpatriotic out-sourcing of helplines offshore to people who - when the going gets tough - hang up on you. Yes, let's rejoice when they crash and burn.

And the computer firms - you know the ones - whose customer service telephone reps hardly speak English unless you mention "Upgrade service" - then they seem to know what you're talking about. Yea - there are some firms I'd love to see go belly up. Or, am I out of bounds here? Get even - buy from the smaller firms that really care.

2. Hang in there.

Shorten those receivables. Market with greater accuracy and effectiveness to reduce costs. Test-mail smaller cells, and read and interpret results more closely. Don't be foolish, but don't be afraid, either.

1. And stay cheerful.

Reminds me of a sign I saw, "Cheer up - things could get worse!" So I cheered up - and sure enough, things got worse. Seriously, if it ain't fun, do something else. Life's short.

Jeff Dobkin will now take your questions. Email him at Jeff@Dobkin.com. Jeffrey Dobkin has written 5 books on direct marketing, and is copywriter specializing in direct response. To order his books or speak with him call 610-642-1000. Visit www.danielleadams.com. Visit Jeff's Favorite Author page at: <http://www.melissadata.com/authors>

12 surprising marketing forecasts for 2009

From Craig A. Huey, Creative Direct Marketing Group

2009 is about to shake up the marketing industry as you know it. The recession will have far-reaching effects, but that's not the only challenge that lies ahead. Here are 12 forecasts to help you prepare for the coming year.



Forecast #1: Businesses that continue to market during the recession will become very profitable and successful by 2010.

During the recession, some marketers will make a fatal or crippling decision to cut prospecting.

And the last five recessions point to one inescapable fact:

Those companies that continue to market will be more profitable and dominant in their categories in the next 12 to 18 months.

A McGraw Hill research study of recessionary marketing, which examined 600 companies over 5 years, revealed those that maintained or increased their advertising during a recession posted an average sales growth of 256%.

In the last recession, only 25% of companies increased their marketing. As a result, their average market share growth outpaced other businesses by 2.5 times.

Action Items:

- Use the best direct marketing possible. Know your cost-per-lead and cost-per-sale for every promotion. Know the lifetime value (LTV) of your customers. Without this data, you're throwing your money away.
- Increase your database marketing for upselling, cross-selling and loyalty efforts. But never stop prospecting...otherwise it will set you back several years in lost opportunities.

Forecast #2: The recession will force smart marketers to upgrade their marketing with powerful direct response copy.

Direct response copy makes the difference between reaching your target and missing your mark.

Focus your messages with a clear Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and benefit-based "you"-oriented copy. Tell your prospects how you're going to make their lives better. Overcome their skepticism with "preemptive" direct response copy that anticipates their objections.

If you do this effectively, your sales will rise even in an economic downturn. But you'll lose sales if you use copy from a traditional advertising agency, or editorial copy.

Action Items:

- Review your current online and print materials. Make sure you're using solid direct response copy, not antimarketing copy written by editors, or an image ad agency.
- Check out the Creative Direct Marketing Group's website (www.cdmginc.com) and the Direct Marketing Center (www.directmarketingcenter.com) for tips on crafting effective direct response copy that can double or triple your response.

Forecast #3: The Golden Age for paid search is over forever—and competition will heat up.

To beat the paid search competition this year, it's important to use unique landing pages with distinct URLs for your paid searches. Your ad message must match your landing page header and body copy.

Also, manage your keyword program as a direct marketer using direct response techniques and principles. Ignoring proven techniques will lose you money.

Action Items:

- Put yourself in your prospects' mindset when choosing keywords. Every month, 368,000 people search using "low price"...but over 20 million use "discount" and more than 100 million use "sale." Check your terms on the Google Adwords keyword finder.
- Aggressively test and retest your paid search ads to make them more responsive. You must determine what's driving response and what's dragging it down.

Forecast #4: Retail advertisers will launch aggressive direct marketing campaigns to augment slowing in-store sales.

Now that all the Christmas promotions are over—and 2008's seasonal sales did not match those of 2007—more retailers will turn to direct response.

The retailers that flourish will be those that do the following:

- Gather information on what their customers buy
- Create loyalty/rewards programs for their best customers
- Bring back past customers
- Communicate effectively and regularly by using direct response copy and art in mail and email

Borders uses direct response email marketing to drive online sales and store traffic among its core customers. Staples reports great success in reaching small business prospects with direct response email and web campaigns.

Action Item:

- Experiment with different formats as part of a multichannel approach, from coupon postcards that push prospects to the web, to catalogs and magalogs. Watch your response skyrocket.

Forecast #5: Major paradigm shift: The informational marketing model will generate maximum response.

The average person sees an unbelievable 1,600 to 3,000 ads every single day. If that doesn't seem possible to you, don't forget to count how many email solicitations you (and your spam filter) delete daily.

The fact is, 2008 was a record spam year, and email response rates declined as a result. With this growing volume, people have become trained to filter out unwanted messages.

Integrating valuable information into your marketing materials is one surefire way to help your message get through—online and off. Why? Because consumers are looking for credibility, not sales hype.

When they receive information they want and need, they will keep reading...and they'll view you as a credible authority.

At my direct marketing advertising agency, we call this the V.I.V.A.™ (Valuable Information, Value-Added) direct marketing system.

Action Items:

- If you need assistance with a value-added approach, call me at 310-212-5727 and ask about how our V.I.V.A. strategy could help your business thrive.
- Make sure your prospect learns something in each mail and email communication you send. That creates value...and it earns you the right to send another message. For example, a nutritional supplement company could include articles with health tips.

- You can also boost email delivery by instructing recipients to add your “from” address to their safe senders list.

Forecast #6: The “classic” Internet homepage is officially obsolete.

Studies show homepages are stagnant billboards that depress response. In 2009, your business should be using microsites and landing pages, which are sites that generate leads or sales for one product.

These pages have powerful sales copy that motivates your prospect to act—and they don’t have navigation distractions.

In other words, homepages are antimarketing; landing pages are direct marketing.

Action Items:

- If your company sells many products, give each its own site with tailored direct response copy that maximizes your SEO or paid search success. Make sure each one has its own URL.
- Also, your microsite should have limited (or zero) navigation options. It should use only direct response copy and graphics to guide the prospect toward action.

Forecast #7: The shopping cart insanity will end in 2009.

It’s time to transform your shopping cart into another direct marketing opportunity. Forget multiple pages with a boring techie fill-in-the-blanks setup.

Most marketers lose more than half of their sales to shopping cart abandonment. But that will change in 2009 as online retailers rush to stop the bleeding.

The smart direct marketer will use the following 2 response-boosting techniques:

1. A seamless ordering process. Streamline your process so only one or two clicks are required to place an order or submit an inquiry.
2. Direct response copy and art in the shopping cart. Use testimonials, sales copy, product information, a guarantee and direct response graphics throughout the process to keep your prospect excited.

Action Items:

- Review your shopping cart. If there are more than three clicks between you and your purchase, or if you lack direct response copy, call me at 310-212-5727. I can help you fix it and boost your response.
- Take another look. Is your shopping cart missing copy and art? Is the guarantee placed where your prospects fill in their name and credit card information?

Forecast #8: Direct mail is about to be outlawed.

Impossible? Not at all. Both state and federal bills proposing “do-not-mail” lists threaten to stifle direct marketers. This would cripple, if not destroy, the industry.

And it's not just politicians, but also several groups like GreenDimes and 41pounds.org that are launching campaigns to stop direct mail.

Direct mail marketers have always supported the Direct Marketing Association's “opt-out” lists, but these new renegade campaigns seek to demonize direct mail...even though many consumers say they want the offers they receive. (Obviously they do, because they respond.)

Environmental activists are now in positions of power in Washington. Their actions will also affect paper costs as they push for recycled paper use.

Action Items:

- Write to members of Congress and your local representatives and tell them that “do-not-mail” laws would cause massive job losses across a number of industries, affecting USPS workers, thousands of businesses, manufacturers, printers and the already-suffering paper industry. (I expect roughly 25 states to consider this legislation.)
- If you're using recycled paper now, take advantage of a public relations bonus by letting your customers and prospects know it.

Forecast #9: Expect a depressing postal rate hike in 2009 as the USPS monopoly—and losses—continue.

The United States Postal Service lost \$2.8 billion by the end of the 2008 fiscal year (Oct. 1, 2007 to Sept. 30, 2008). Mail volume has declined by 9.5 billion pieces. And the inflation rate is close to 6%.

Expect the Postal Regulatory Commission to ask for at least a 6% increase in rates for each class of mail. They could impose an “exigent rate” due to their losses—but that's unlikely.

A 6% increase in a recession is irresponsible and makes no economic sense. It will only increase postal losses as businesses and consumers find cheaper ways to exchange goods and information.

In fact, the Federal Trade Commission has ruled that the Postal Service's legal status puts it at a competitive disadvantage. And that releasing the USPS monopoly on mailboxes and mail delivery would actually reduce USPS costs.

Private competition will lower mailing costs and encourage innovation in the mail delivery field. Unfortunately, deregulation is not likely to come out of the Obama administration.

Action Items:

- Do your testing of new postal lists and new creative between now and May, when an increase is likely to occur.

- Contact members of Congress and urge them to follow the FTC's recommendations to repeal the private express statute that prohibits postal competition.
- For a good review of the issue, download the CATO Institute briefing paper, The U.S. Postal Service War on Private Mailboxes and Privacy Rights, available at www.cato.org/pubs/briefs/bp48.pdf.

Forecast #10: The list market will grow by 25% in 2009 (more than double 2008's growth).

The recession will put more new mailing lists on the market as companies enjoy the easy extra revenue that list rental brings.

Postal mail and email lists will be in big demand by direct marketers looking for niche markets. You always have approval of the pieces that are sent out, and the rental is for a one-time use.

Action Item:

- Take a look at your email and postal mail lists. Then call Megan at InfoMat at 310-212-5944 to find out how your lists could add tens of thousands of dollars to your bottom line.

Forecast #11: Market shift arrives: Maturing Baby Boomers and Generation Xers change your product positioning.

As the oldest of the Baby Boomers prepare for retirement and Generation X is entering their 40s, their needs are changing. In response, smart direct marketers are adjusting their marketing and product mix strategies.

Baby Boomers care about investment issues, health matters and vacation packages. Generation X will now be taking the Boomers' place in the post-30s demographic and will have their eye on child raising, mortgages and long-term financial planning.

Businesses impacted by these changes must shift their marketing strategies to reach prospects. For example: Baby Boomers love premiums. Generation X loves discounts.

Action Item:

- Take a close look at your marketing and product mix for Boomers and Gen Xers. Remember that no one likes to be marketed to as an "old person," which is why Cadillac has redesigned its cars and reinvented its image. Oldsmobile didn't...and paid the price.

Forecast #12: Format shift: The magalog and bookalog are exploding.

Postal mail continues to be the #1 avenue for most aggressive marketers to reach prospects. In an age of skepticism and declining response rates, a huge number of marketers will use, for the first time, magalogs and bookalogs. These formats are an unbeatable way to reach prospects.

Magalogs are powerful sales pieces that resemble traditional magazines. Typically 16 to 24 pages long,

they feature one central article with several supporting sidebar articles. With great direct response copy, your prospects will be drawn into the article, and you get an excellent opportunity to make a full pitch for your product or service.

A bookalog is similar but resembles a paperback and typically runs about 100–150 pages long. This type of sales piece has been used successfully for both business-to-business and consumer marketing—including fund-raising.

Both of these have immense potential for sales and are a key example of how great direct response copy and strategy can deliver proven measurable results.

Action Item:

- We have some case studies on our website that can really give you a fresh perspective on direct mail campaigns. Log on to www.cdmginc.com/cs and take a look.

Now that you know what's on the horizon for 2009, it's time to take action. If you'd like to explore new marketing opportunities this year, or boost your profits, give me a call at 310-212-5727 or email me at craig@cdmginc.com. My team and I at Creative Direct Marketing Group can help you achieve your business goals. Visit Craigs Favorite Author's page at: <http://www.melissadata.com/authors>

About Melissa Data Corp.

For more than 24 years Melissa Data has empowered direct marketers, developers and database professionals with tools to validate, standardize, de-dupe, geocode and enrich contact data for custom, Web and enterprise data applications. The company's flagship products include: Data Quality Suite, MatchUp[®], and MAILERS+4[®]. For more information and free trials, visit www.MelissaData.com or call 1-800-MELISSA.