



3 Good Reasons Why Your Business Should Have a Catalog:

Betty woke up early Saturday morning. She waited for her household to rouse; made a pot of coffee; took a relaxing early morning stroll to her mailbox; watched the birds chirp and flutter in the distance. She carries her mail back to her kitchen table, pours her coffee, and pulls the catalog out from under the rest of the bills, flyers, credit card offers, and insurance forms. She takes a sip of coffee, breathes in the quietness of the morning, and begins to browse through her catalog waiting for her family to wake up. This is what we call *surprise mail*. If it hadn't been for that catalog in Betty's mailbox she 1.) would probably never know that the company existed; and 2.) would not have browsed that company's product.

Direct mail marketing is a great way to put your company in front of prospective customers. You are not giving them the choice. They have to touch the catalog. They have to physically handle it. They have to decide whether to toss it or to open it. They do not need to start up their computers or pay for a monthly internet service or *just happen* across your webpage in order to see your product. Rather, they discover your product on their own in their daily lives while tending to their affairs. It's a great marketing strategy.

Since Gutenberg's 1436 invention of the printing press, print has not only provided people with connectivity, entertainment, and education, but it has practically carried the economy. Although, print used to be the only means of communicating to individuals, many entrepreneurs now believe that internet has stepped forth and absorbed all of its glory. Let's question this logic:

Radio did not die at the expense of television. In fact television and radio are far from dead, they are thriving still and are used in conjunction with each other. The internet, powerful as it is has not killed television and television, powerful as it is, has not killed radio. Sure, people thought it would; they were afraid of losing their businesses and their jobs; there's no doubting that there were definite dry spells. But, all of this must be expected. Transition is never easy. The internet is here and it's not going away. The question is: Will the internet take over what used to be one of the most cost effective means of marketing? –the catalog?

The *Direct Marketing* website (*dmnews.com*) has not been shy about exploring the debates between direct mail campaigns and internet advertising campaigns. They posted a debate between Nancy Sloan, Principal at *Zoom Iq2*, and Rob Reif, President at *Media Networks, Inc.* In the debate, Sloan argues that direct mail marketing is a dying fad that wastes both paper and resources while Reif believes that print is a valuable tool for retailers. In a similar story DMNews asked “Should retailers print catalogs?” Pat McGrew from Kodak responds: “There is no doubt that e-marketing can be an extremely cost-effective way to promote products and services, but there is also no question that as a sole marketing channel, the reach of its message is limited.” Catalogers are asking should we discontinue our catalog while pure ecommerce businesses are asking should we be printing a catalog? Whether you are a web based business thinking about starting a catalog or a cataloger thinking about expanding to a web based business, here are Three GOOD Reasons of Why to Print a Catalog.

- 1) **Print Improves Lifetime Value**
- 2) **Print is a Physical Experience**
- 3) **Print Drives Online Behavior**

Lifetime Value: Steve Lett, owner and founder of Lett Direct, Inc. and staff have conducted many studies over the years to determine how effective catalogs are for driving retail sales. What they have found over the course of time supports that a business with a catalog is better positioned to survive in our current economy. Steve says that “it’s not enough to mail a catalog.” One must manage their circulation program as well. Lett Direct refers to this as the “Mail Smart” Program. A cataloger should complete the following steps to ensure success from their catalogs:

- 1.) Manage Circulation
- 2.) Track Return on Investment (ROI)
- 3.) Forecast Sales and Orders
- 4.) Analyze Results
- 5.) Manage Circulation Again

It’s really that simple. If you find that a catalog is not generating profit, it’s not because cataloging doesn’t work, Steve explains, “it’s because you need to regenerate your circulation plan.” Once you’ve evaluated your circulation plan, you’ll be better equipped to identify the sources of your sales. Other research from Lett Direct, Inc. suggests that a catalog shopper is a “Customer” that has “*Lifetime Value*” whereas an online shopper is classically an “Item Buyer,” or onetime purchaser. Why? Because that one time purchaser is most likely a destination shopper looking for a specific item. They are likely to purchase their next item from another retailer, online, or elsewhere because that one time purchaser has no sense of loyalty. The catalog “Customer,” on the other hand, has loyalty. Statistics prove that catalog shoppers return over and over again, they love the brand and they love the products; they’ll share it with their

friends; best of all, they are LOYAL. Lett Direct estimates that 15-20% of sales are generated from the internet, while about 80% of sales are generated because someone received a catalog in the mail. Wow, 80%! That's 80% more business you could have if you're thinking about starting a catalog. So, what does this tell us? As Steve says: you need to get "people beyond the initial purchase." Catalogers need to segment out their one time purchasers and focus on lifetime shoppers; they are the ones that breathe life into your business and they are obtained through direct mail marketing. They come from your printed catalogs.

Print is a Physical Experience: From the smell of the paper, to the turning of pages, to the glossy feel on your fingertips, to the visual appeal, a catalog offers its readers a complete experience. More, a catalog is multidimensional: real, physical, and the only form of marketing that stimulates multiple senses simultaneously. Now, consider this: a consumer is far more likely to pass along a catalog to other people who have similar interests. Don't believe it? Ask Mary Kay, Pampered Chef, or Scentsy what drives their sales? National Public Radio (NPR) published an article written by Lynn Neary titled *Put Down Your E-Reader: This Book is Better in Print*. In the article Neary writes:

Most people who read a lot have gotten used to reading on a screen, whether it's a laptop, a tablet or an e-reader. Some say they prefer it to the experience of reading a heavy, awkward print version of the book. But every now and then, a book comes along that just seems to *insist* on being physical — something about it simply can't be transferred to the screen.

Think about this in catalog terms. Catalogs insist on being read. It's just not the same browsing through them on a screen.

Print is a Strong Driver of Online Behavior: The Magazine Publishers of America (MPA) conducted a recent survey with results pointing towards the fact that offline media successfully drives online traffic. Studies also indicate that a much higher percentage of consumers are more effectively communicated through printed ads than any other form of media (results for these case studies can be found at magazine.org). Another article from chooseprint.org states: "Studies show that print advertising drives consumers to online shopping. An iProspect study found that 67% of online searches are driven by offline messages, with 39% of shoppers ultimately making a purchase." If you want consumers to visit your website with little prodding, or e-mail campaigns, or traffic sharing programs, your best bet is to send them a catalog. We know the internet is effective; what we don't often realize is that the internet is also affected. The internet works hand in hand with other forms of media, such as television, radio, and print. The idea is to use one to increase your chances of being successful with the other. So, if you are a catalog based business, you should utilize the internet and if you are a web-based business, you should

utilize print. As the studies have shown, they are most effective while working together. In fact, most studies have indicated that multi-marketing is the most efficient way to reach out to your consumers.

So the question should not be *why print a catalog*, but rather *why not print a catalog*? There is really no competition between internet and print, instead you should view it as collaboration. The most practical businesspeople will utilize both forms of marketing. The best thing we can do for both industries is unify the gap between them.

Resources

<http://www.dmnews.com/should-brands-discontinue-print-catalogs/article/217255/>

<http://www.dmnews.com/should-internet-retailers-print-catalogs/article/176469/>

<http://www.npr.org/2012/09/28/161923952/put-down-your-e-reader-this-books-better-in-print>

<http://stateofthedia.org/2012/magazines-are-hopes-for-tablets-overdone/>

<http://www.richardrbecker.com/2007/10/increasing-traffic-magazine-publishers.html>

<http://www.chooseprint.org/PDS.html>

<http://www.magazine.org/>

<http://techcrunch.com/2012/10/24/online-ad-survey-most-u-s-consumers-annoyed-by-online-ads-prefer-tv-ads-to-online-want-social-media-dislike-button-and-reckon-most-marketing-is-a-bunch-of-b-s/>

<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Print+Ads+drive+Web+traffic,+influence+consumer+behavior.-a0197362164>

<http://www.chooseprint.org/PDS.html>