



Google Admits It: Google Doesn't Work!

THAT HEADLINE IS A CHEAP TRICK BUT SOME PEOPLE MIGHT THINK IT'S TRUE BECAUSE GOOGLE HAS BEEN USING DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGNS TO SEND OUT \$100 CREDITS TO PROSPECTIVE ADVERTISERS. DOES THIS MEAN THAT GOOGLE IS ADMITTING THE WEB DOESN'T WORK?

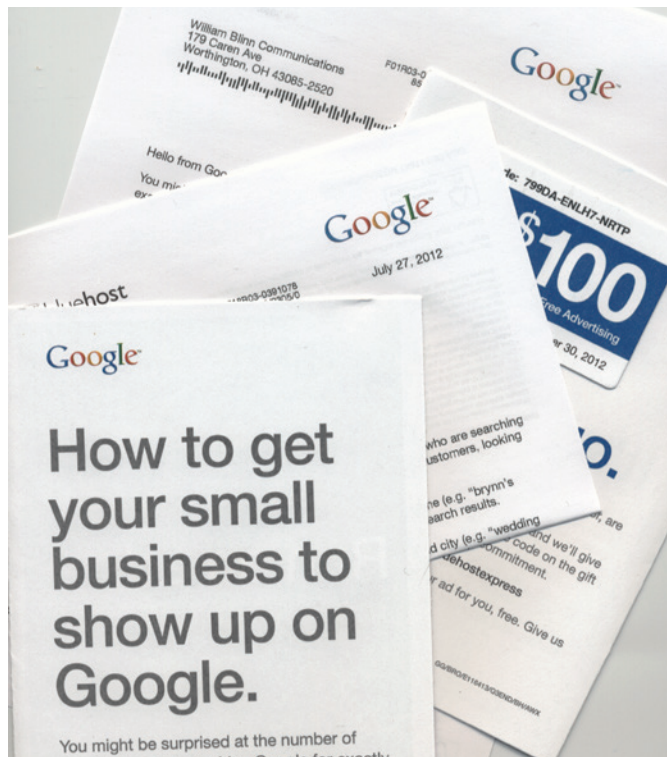
In a word, No. What Google is admitting is that the Web doesn't exist in a vacuum and the overarching lesson to take home from Google's generosity is that people won't buy something until they internalize the need for it and convince themselves that they want it.

Let's play a little time-travel game. It's now 1969 but in an alternate universe. The Web already exists and everyone has a personal computer. Gasoline is selling for 30¢ per gallon and a company in Japan has just invented a small car called the Prizm that has a small gasoline engine and an electrical propulsion system that runs on batteries.

Would anyone buy it?

Probably not and for two very good reasons. First, it's a new concept, one that nobody is ready for; second, although 30¢ is expensive, it's not sufficiently expensive that people are actively seeking change.

So the advertising director for Toyboata, the company that invented the Prizm, decides to set up a lavish website that explains all the advantages of this new little car and after a new months, sales go absolutely ... nowhere. Why?



In a 3-day period, I received 2 \$100 offers, one directly from Google and the other from my hosting company, BlueHost.

The little Prizm is clearly a great idea that's decades ahead of its time but nobody would understand the advantages that this car would offer.

"Timing is everything." That's something that a long-time friend says frequently and, although I agree that timing is something, it's not everything. If you plan to sell a product or service that's ahead of its time, you'd better be prepared to provide a

lot of educational information and you should also be prepared not to see sales take off like a rocket.

Are You Selling Prisms?

COMPANIES THAT SELL AUTO INSURANCE OR LAUNDRY SOAP OR FAST-FOOD HAMBURGERS DON'T HAVE TO MAKE THE CASE FOR THEIR PRODUCTS.

Maybe you do have to make the case for your product and, if so, the Web shouldn't be the only arrow in your quiver.

Perhaps Google understands something that many business owners don't and that simple fact is this: Until somebody knows that they might want to consider purchasing your product or service, they're not going to seek out your website.

Google knows that a lot of companies have websites but they also know that most of the business owners who have websites have never given Google AdWords a thought. After all, business owners don't go out of their way looking for ways to spend money.

If Google knows that it can't attract new customers using the Web alone, it can do what intelligent marketers have done for decades and that is to put the US Postal Service to work.

Yes, direct mail is expensive and postal rates will go up again in 2013 but the cost is both an disadvantage and an advantage.

How can a higher cost be an advantage? The price keeps some players out of the marketplace and makes your direct mail stand out. Remember

10 or 15 years ago when everyone's mailbox was constantly filled with silly little catalogs? How many of those do you see today?

Because direct mail has an "old media" reputation, far too many people ignore it. Although my primary function these days involves website development, I know that creating a killer website does not guarantee business success.

Unfortunately, that message often goes unnoticed.

Direct mail can be used to drive traffic to a website. That is exactly what Google is doing with its direct-mail campaign. The owner of a small business might not think of using Google AdWords but a letter from Google might be enough to convince the business owner to check it out.

The people who run Google know that they won't make sales unless people come to their website and they see direct-mail advertising as a way to drive traffic to their own site.

Should you be using direct mail?

Ready! Fire! Aim!

USING DIRECT MAIL ISN'T AS SIMPLE AS BUYING A BOX OF ENVELOPES AND A ROLL OF STAMPS BUT IT'S NOT PARTICULARLY COMPLICATED, EITHER.

In fact, only two key components exist in direct-mail advertising: A list and a message. The list determines who will receive your message. The message is, of course, what you offer.

Many people consider the message to be the more important of the two but that's wrong. Send me a well written, beautifully printed brochure about cigars and it will be in the wastebasket within 3 seconds even if the company offers me a lifetime supply for free. I'm simply not interested in cigars. But if you send me a poorly written, amateurishly designed, badly printed page that describes a high-tech gizmo, I'll read at least some of it.

Ideally, both the list and the offer should be good but no matter good the offer is, if you send it to the wrong list, it will flop.

The first step should be to identify the people who might be prospects for your product or service. Companies such as Edith Roman (edithroman.com) have decades of experience in providing direct-mail lists.

Selections can be based on the recipient's locations, demographics, psychographics, income

level, and more so it's worthwhile to spend time developing and fine tuning the selection criteria.

Concurrently with list development, think about your message, keeping in mind that your goal at this point is not to sell your product or service.

That is such an important point that I'm going to repeat it: In developing your initial direct-mail campaign, **the goal is not to sell your product or service.** Instead, all you want the recipients to do is respond by sending an e-mail, calling your phone number, or visiting the website.



Direct mail can be used to create interest in your product or service. When potential buyers respond directly, they can be added to an e-mail marketing list. Those who respond by visiting the website can also be encouraged to sign up for follow-up e-mail messages. The goal, of course, is to push as many prospects as possible through the sales pipeline.

Don't Rush It

MARKETING IS A LOT LIKE COOKING BECAUSE IT CAN'T BE RUSHED.

Many years ago, I decided to make lunch for my grandmother. I was hungry and tried to speed the process along. What I learned that day was that turning the stove to its highest setting doesn't cook a hamburger any faster. It creates a burned hamburger with a raw center.

Trying to accelerate a marketing campaign will have equally poor results.

So if Toyboata had been trying to sell Prizm automobiles in that alternate-universe 1969, it probably wouldn't have had much success with a direct-mail campaign that highlighted fuel savings or reduced emissions.

The company might have had some success in talking about a car that's nearly silent.

The important point here is to find something that will interest the person you're sending the campaign to.

Just One Person

MANY PEOPLE THINK THAT DIRECT-MAIL CAMPAIGNS ARE IMPERSONAL BUT THAT THIS CAN BE OVERCOME BY USING THE RECIPIENT'S NAME SEVERAL TIMES. NOT SO.

Using the recipient's name on the card or in the letter *personalizes* the message but does nothing at all to make it *personal*.

When you're preparing a marketing message, one of the most productive strategies involves keeping one person in mind. Maybe it's a real person or maybe it's your ideal prospect. Then write a personal message to that person.

When you're finished, instead of sending the message to the one person you had in mind when you composed it,

you'll send it to your entire list.

When you concentrate on writing a personal message to an individual, you'll avoid message-killing terms such as "some of you will be interested in my product or service."

You'll also probably not spend the first critical paragraph explaining who you are.

With direct-response messages, it's critically important to immediately address the benefits that your product or service provides.

A quarter of a century ago, we knew that people spent, on average, less than 5 seconds to decide whether a letter or brochure was worth their time. In the past 25 years, life has not become more leisurely, so *get to the point*.

What's In It for ME? 



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