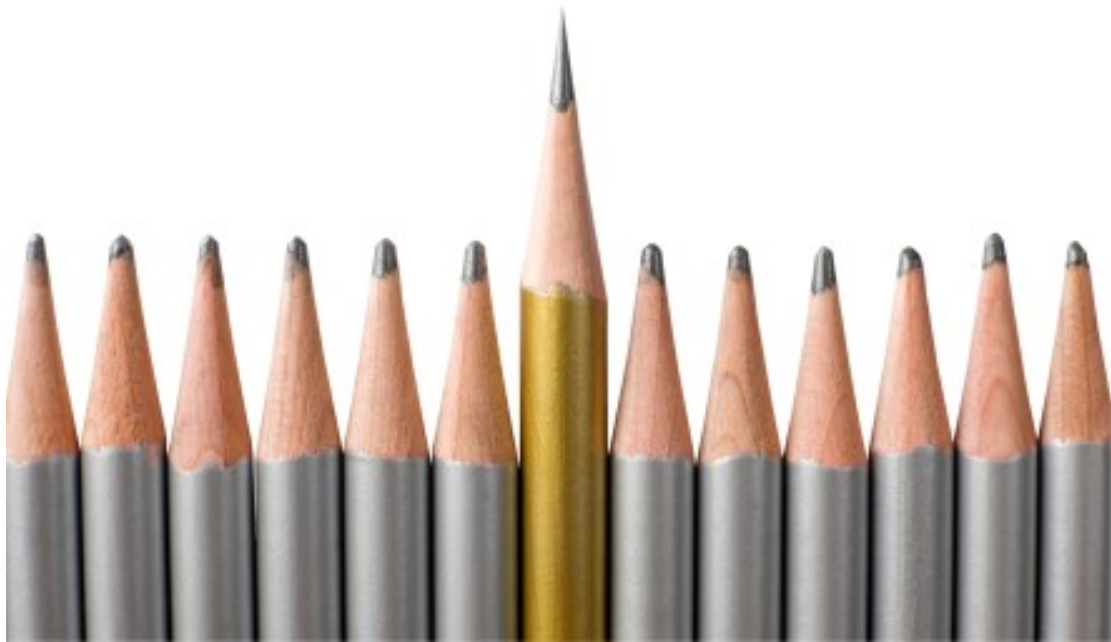


Direct Response Creative



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Published by DWS Associates, Minneapolis, Minnesota

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The three parts of response creativity are the offer, the market and the creative treatment. In this section, we are going to discuss creative aspects of Direct Marketing. Presentation definitely matters. You first need to determine the primary objective of the advertisement. Is it supposed to generate immediate sales, inquiries, highly qualified leads, donations, or drive immediate retail traffic. Bed, Bath & Beyond does an excellent job of generating demand with the 15% and 20% off an item, limited time offer, post card promotions.

The presentation of the offer and details are dependent on the objective. From a direct marketing perspective, the two primary objectives are lead generation and direct selling. The two objectives require different presentation approaches.

Lead Generation



In lead generation, the objective is to get qualified leads and to do this from a creative perspective, you avoid telling the whole story. You want to arouse attention, get interest, tell them why they should act, and ask for immediate action. A lead generation package might only touch on key benefits of the product. The package might also need to give enough information to weed out “browsers.” Tactically, this involves saying “see how...find out how...” The salesperson does the closing.

Direct Selling

In direct selling, the objective is to get direct by-mail, phone, fax, web...the actual order. The strategy is to tell as much as possible, so that all of the questions are answered in the prospect’s mind and they make the buying decision immediately. The package must present all of the advantages of making the purchase and overcome any objections a customer might have to closing the sale. It also needs to outline all the terms of sale. No salesperson is necessarily involved. The exception would be a case where the customer actually calls the marketer to place the order and speaks to one of the marketer’s sales representatives. This situation gives the direct marketer the opportunity to upsell the customer and also sells the customer add-ons.

The strategy is to tell as much as possible within the constraints of the medium involved. This is why, on television, most direct selling commercials are 90 to 120 seconds long in short form, and as long as 30 minutes in long form.

Different formats may do better for different types of offers. Self-mailers work well for seminars. Post cards work well for discount offers to drive retail traffic. Catalogs and email messages with multi-product offers work well for multichannel catalog/e-commerce merchants.

The creative strategy covers the product, competitive products, market, media, budget, objectives and the creative implementation. There are five basic steps in managing a successful creative interaction and all of this happens before one word of copy is written.

- A statement of objectives and overall time frame for their accomplishment is developed.
- All historical data is reviewed and necessary research is completed.
- The market definition is set.
- The creative platform, concept and offer testing are developed.
- The budget and test structure is developed.

What comes out of all of this process is the following:

- The price range or variations that should be tested and what kinds of offers are established.
- The number of creative concepts or creative formats that should be developed and tested are set.
- The extent of the media buy or size of list rental is determined.
- The test structure and test parameters are established.
- Production costs are estimated.
- The overall budget costs/projections with clear parameters on response levels for go, no-go decisions are set.
- A realistic time frame for testing and implementation, taking into consideration seasonal variables, is established.



The Creative Brief

Whether your direct marketing creative is produced by your in-house marketing communications department or an outside creative agency, all parties, product marketing/merchandising, marketing communications, the outside agency all need to understand Direct Response advertising. The client needs to understand DR advertising so they can give the agency all of the right

information needed to produce the advertisement. The agency or the in-house marketing communications department has to know all of the right questions to ask to get the information they need to produce the ad. Thus there is the need for the all-important creative brief or advertising fact sheet. Keep in mind that a creative brief or advertising fact sheet for a Direct Response advertisement/campaign provides a great deal more information than a typical advertising brief used for general advertising. Whether your promotional packages are created in-house or by your direct response advertising agency, the following information is required to develop successful creative:

Description of product: What product or service are you offering? Describe it in 50 words or less. Be sure to enclose a sample of the product.

Purpose of product: What does the product do? How is it used? How does it work?

Product features: Give all the details about the product - color, size, weight, material, number of parts, power ratings, number of working parts, and/or whatever other facts and specifications are appropriate.

Main benefits of the product: What is the key sales appeal of this product? What are the other major benefits? What will it do for the user? Does it save time or money? Will it make life easier or better?

- Does it solve a problem? If so, what is that problem and how does it solve it?

Comparison to other products: How does it compare to other products already on the market (or about to come on the market)? What will it give users that they can't get anywhere else? How is it different? Is it newer or better? Is it unique? Is it an exclusive? Is it less expensive? Is it a better buy? Do you provide better service? Do you have any related products? If so, how does this product tie in with those? Will you later sell those products to buyers of this product?

Price: What is the price? Are there any extra costs such as shipping and handling? Are there any discounts? Are there any deluxe versions? Are there any alternatives? Are there any deadlines for receiving special offers?

Payment methods: What options will you be offering for payments? Cash with

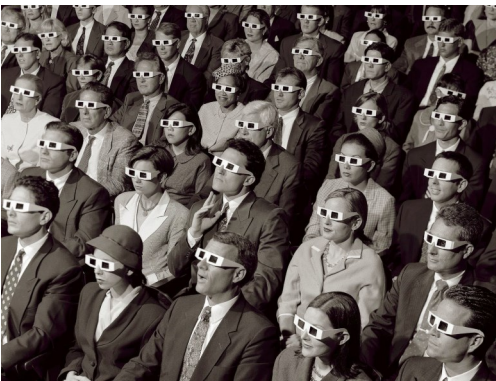


order? Billing? Purchase order required? Credit cards?

The offer: What is the offer? What do you want the recipient to respond to? Is this a special offer? Is there a premium? Is it an introductory offer? Are there prepublication discounts? Is it a limited-time offer? Are you offering free information?

The package or promotion: Direct mail package consisting of what elements? Letter? Lift letter? Brochure? Catalog? Self-mailer? Or is it a display ad? An email with dedicated landing page? A newsletter? A postcard? An insert? An entire campaign? Enclose samples of previous promotions for this product or other products your company has sold. Which were winners? Losers?

The objective of the promotion: Is the objective to gain direct sales, leads, inquiries? Or is it to provide product information to customers? Gain an extra sale?



Respond to inquiries? Announce new products? Stimulate immediate retail sales? Build the company's or product's image? If so, what image should be conveyed?

The audience: Who is the prime prospect? What are the characteristics of the target audience(s)? If a business audience, what is the title and/or responsibility of the prospect? If a consumer, what are the interests, problems, concerns, demographics, and characteristics of the typical prospect? Are there any secondary audiences? If so, is it worth preparing separate versions of the promotion for them?

The lists/media to be used: What lists or media will you be using? Be specific. Which have you used in the past? Which worked? Which did not?

Tests: Will you be conducting any tests? If so, what points will be tested? Will tests affect the design of the package? The offer? The copy?

Budget: What is the budget for this promotion? How much will be available for each part of the promotion? For lists? For the package? For other costs? Are there any restrictions? For example, no 4-color brochures or no flashy involvement devices.

Schedule: When do you need the complete package? What are the approval dates? When will you be sending out the first test mailing or placing the first advertisement?

Testimonials: Do you have any testimonials for the product? Celebrity

endorsements? Reviews? Other media coverage? Enclose samples.

Complaints: Have you ever had any complaints about this product or any similar products? Do you have any letters from unhappy customers? Any bad reviews or media coverage? Enclose samples if there are.

Must include the following: What points absolutely must be included in the copy? What benefits or features must be stressed? What design elements absolutely must be part of the package? Any points that absolutely must be avoided? Any words or phrases? Any designs?

Excludes or taboos: Any taboos? Anything that cannot be offered or promised?

Guarantee: What is your guarantee? How strong is it? What are its limits? 30-day free trial period? 100% money-back guarantee? Return privileges? Inspection privileges? A warranty?

Ordering process: How will orders come? Will you provide a BRE? Accept phone orders? Accept collect calls? Will you have a toll-free phone number? Will you use an 800 phone number? Will you have a dedicated URL and landing page for the advertisement? What percentage of your orders are now by phone or web? Will orders come any other way besides web, phone or mail?

Company information to include: What is the history of the company? Any special points? What about the personality of the owner? Any special expertise? Any points about the company or owners/managers that might have impact on sales?

Anything else? Note any other information or points which could be useful to the copywriters and designers. Include any background material that you think might be helpful. Recommend additional reading material, if it is appropriate.



Keys to Successful Direct Response Creative

The keys to successful direct response creative include:

- The COPY is in keeping with audience / offer.
- The FORMAT is consistent with the offer.
- The DESIGN / GRAPHICS are consistent with the offer.

- The RESPONSE DEVICE restates the offer.
- It gets the prospect to ACT IMMEDIATELY.
- It tells them WHAT TO DO.
- It tells them HOW TO DO IT.

Concept Evaluation

After you have supplied the marketing communications department and/or the creative agency with the creative briefing for the campaign or promotion and they have had the opportunity to develop concepts for the advertisements / packages, the next step is evaluation of the concept before it's approved for production.

These are the questions that you need to ask as you are going through this review:

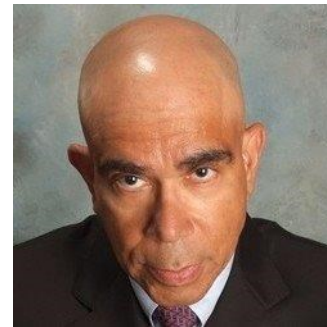
- Does the concept meet the definition of the purpose?
- Does it mesh with your other advertising?
- If it breaks from your traditional advertising, is the break justifiable?
- Does the concept offer a benefit, a promise, stress the value, and/or have a reason for the customer to act now?
- Does it stay within the direct response marketing tradition, at least in the broadest sense?

About DWS Associates

Founded in 1982, DWS Associates is a full service marketing firm that develops and implements multi-channel marketing programs for organizations targeting business-to-consumer and business-to-business audiences in global markets. Our focus is on data-driven, innovative lead generation, lead nurturing, retention, and referral programs that attract, engage and retain profitable customers. Our staff is highly experienced in market research, competitive intelligence, business intelligence and analytics, strategic planning and campaign management - so we help you increase sales and marketing performance while building strong, unique, differentiated brands.

About the Authors: Dudley Stevenson

Dudley Stevenson, founder and CEO of DWS Associates, has over thirty-five years' experience in consumer marketing, business-to-business marketing, and direct marketing, including developing, planning, and implementing go-to-market strategies. He's also the author of "Marketing Direct:



Breaking Through The Clutter." Working with organizations ranging from start-ups to Fortune 100 companies, he and his team have helped clients such as IBM, SAS Institute, Sony, Neiman Marcus, Arizona Highways, Marshall Field & Co., Mrs. Field's, UNICEF, SSA Global Technologies, Hartmarx, and Patagonia implement successful direct marketing programs. A longtime member of the Direct Marketing Association and the American Marketing Association, Stevenson is also a sought-after speaker. He's given hundreds of presentations and workshops on marketing and direct marketing. His "Marketing Planning 101" workshop alone has reached more than sixty thousand marketing and sales professionals.