

Creative, personalised direct mail.

THE DIRECT MAIL RENAISSANCE

While most marketers tend to look to the Internet or mobile phones for the latest new thing in marketing, one of the biggest revolutions is occurring within the oldest form of communication – the written word. Malcolm Auld of advertising agency Malcolm Auld Direct reports.

The written word is making a comeback and it's having such an impact on how marketers create the printed message then link it to personalised websites that I've coined the term The Direct Mail Renaissance to reflect the growth in the use of personalised mail.

The key drivers behind the Renaissance are a number of unrelated elements, but when combined, they open up enormous opportunities to develop actions that cut through traditional media and generate far greater results for a brand.

The elements include; new creative design technologies, workflow software, improved data quality (thanks to privacy laws); high-end digital print

technology that produces offset quality printing; and some Australia Post initiatives.

Personal media

New design technologies allow you to create your own fonts using any pixel you like to creatively produce a customer's name or message.

As every good marketer knows, the personal media are the most powerful for building brands, so the more creatively you can personalise your communications, the better your results.

This postcard (above) used the chocolate in the foam as pixels in the font.

Using workflow software such as

XMPie, you can create and manage a personal communications campaign from your desktop – prepare the data sets, upload and manipulate data, import text, graphics and images and send them directly to a printer and website for production.

Identical messages – image and text – can then appear on a postcard, mailpack, poster, banner, sticker or other print media, as well as on a website, email newsletter and even SMS.

Tailored websites

More beneficial is the ability of the software to personalise the URL/website address in mail or press advertisements (subscriber publications). This allows respondents to link to matching individually personalised websites that feature the same content as the original mailing or advert.

The websites are populated according to the data you hold about your client, so each site is tailored in a relevant way to each individual.

The magazine advert shown above right shows how it is personalised to the publications' subscribers with a URL linking them to a personalised website.

But it's not just limited to name and address details. Using the data relevant to each customer, your message can be personalised using images, maps, gender, previously purchased products and much more.

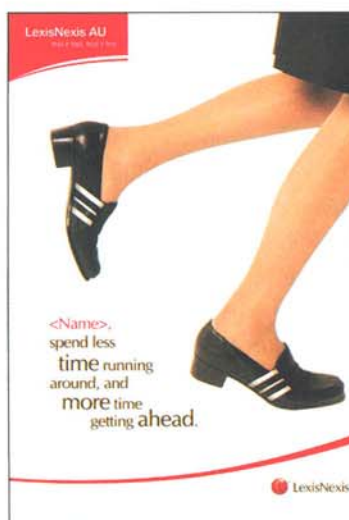
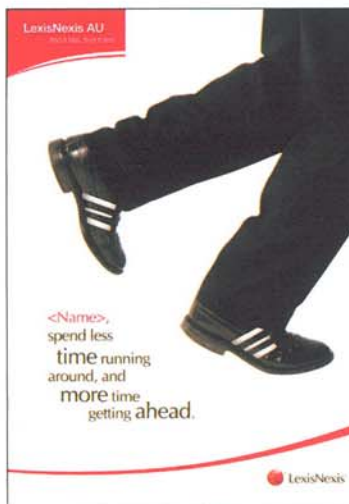
This brochure (at right) was mailed in Australia to legal librarians using name and gender to differentiate the message. Female librarians received a brochure with images of female legs on the cover and inside spread, while male librarians received images of male legs on the cover and inside spread. The mailing generated the highest-ever response to a promotion for this legal software service.

This postcard (opposite page) made the Wolverine shoe the No1 selling shoe for Sears in the US in just

This advertisement is personalised with the subscriber's name in the headline and URL.



Gender personalisation using image and text.



one week. It's not the \$5 discount that generated the response; it's the way each customer's address was displayed. Every postcard has a map that highlights the route from their home to their nearest Sears store – and the number of steps it will take to get there. But Sears recommends the customer buy the walking shoe first. That's an extremely relevant and quite a creative way of using a person's address details.

While the initial reaction to the privacy laws was one of concern among marketers, in reality they have worked more in their favour. Consumers are now more open to opting-in to receive marketing messages because they know they are protected by privacy laws and have recourse if their trust is abused.

Australia Post also recently launched Impact Mail – a service that allows die-cut and unusually shaped mailings to be delivered without envelopes. The format is very suitable for invitations, sales announcements, events and uncomplicated messages that don't require lots of copy.

The 'Smile Brian' postcard (following page) is the first Impact Mail postcard to use a creative font technology and it also used a personalised URL as the reply device.

Delivering results

The proof of the impact these new technologies are having, is in the results. In one recent test generic mailing generated a 5 per cent response rate, while the personalised mailing with personalised website generated a 22.5 per cent response rate – that's more than a 450 per cent better result.

Even more significant is the impact on consumer attitudes to brands using the technology. Consumers are keeping the mailings and pinning them on their walls or refrigerators. The consumers' attitude towards the brand is stronger than those who don't receive



Above: The successful individually addressed Wolverine advertisement made it the No 1 selling shoe for Sears. Right: Dandelions are used as the font in this unusually shaped reply device.



the mailing, or are only exposed to traditional mass media advertising.

Any one can use this technology, because it is so easy to test small quantities – you can print one or one million units. And testing is the key to profitable marketing.

The printed word is here for the

long haul. People prefer to read from a paper than from a screen and it's also easier. No waiting for downloads or scrolling to get the complete picture.

And if your printed words are the words your customer loves to read – their name – and they are produced

in a creative way with relevant imagery and data, your responses will increase and your brand value will grow.

You can download a copy of The Direct Mail Renaissance white paper at www.malcolmaulddirect.com . MB