





# Spicing up direct mail with new digital print technologies

Here, direct marketer Malcolm Auld explains which digital technology products are making direct mail more appealing than ever.

Over the past 15 months I've been running a series of seminars and training courses around Australasia titled The Direct Mail Renaissance.

You may wonder why I believe direct mail is experiencing a renaissance – particularly given the influence of the Internet over so much of marketing communications these days.

But with e-mail choking on its own success and no longer a viable acquisition medium, marketers are looking for the latest new thing to help them expand their business. Interestingly, you need only look at one of the oldest forms of communication for the next technology leap – that is, the printed word.



Direct marketer Malcolm Auld believes that direct mail is undergoing a major renaissance in Australia.

The renaissance is occurring because of the alignment of a number of mostly unrelated factors. And when you see the creative options now available, you'll realise why direct mail has become sexy again and why marketers are achieving results way above historical campaigns.

The factors I believe are responsible for this rebirth of direct mail are:

- new design software for fonts
- new desktop workflow software for campaign management
- high-end digital colour print technology
- privacy laws and their impact on data quality
- new Australia Post services
- technology investment by printers and mailing houses.

Font design software such as DreamType and Direct Smile, combined with workflow software like XMPie, are radically altering the creative possibilities for direct mail and particularly how it integrates with websites and other print and electronic media.

The latest high-quality, variable-data digital colour printers have made short-run personalised printing cost effective, with the quality as good as offset. Mail houses and printers are investing in this new technology and encouraging marketers to use it.

A by-product of the new privacy laws is the improved quality of the data held by marketers. Databases hold much better quality data, allowing better targeting and personalisation. And because consumers know they are protected by the privacy laws, they are opting in to more lists with the knowledge that they are protected against misuse of their data.

Australia Post has also introduced a number of new services – such as Impact Mail – to encourage more creative mail solutions.

Each of these activities on their own is not hugely significant, but because they have all occurred simultaneously, the result is changing the way marketers think about direct mail. And what has got them really thinking is the creative way in which print media can now be personalised – using data, graphics, colour and other variables – and integrated with personalised websites.

As every 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.

The most important thing in the world to most people is themselves – and the more you can flatter people with relevant communications reflecting creative use of specific data about them, the more strongly you build your brand and your sales.



## Integrate personalised mail and web communications

XMPie is a desktop workflow tool distributed in Australia by Fuji Xerox. It allows the user to prepare and manage a personal communications campaign from their 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 personalised messages – image and text – can then appear on a postcard, a mail pack, a poster, banners, stickers or other print media, as well as on a website, an HTML newsletter and even via SMS. In fact, the recipient of a mailing can link via a personalised URL directly to a unique website that features the same content as in the mailing.

## Personalise all your printed media for best results

The illustrated sample from i2media used personalised mail with a DreamType font linked to a personalised website (01) to invite prospects to the launch of its new digital technology.

The attendees were to be picked up in a bus and driven to the event. On the website they chose their preferred drink and snack for the trip. They also registered their favourite colour and the colour of the iPod they would like to win in the door prize.

When they boarded the bus, each delegate received a personal travel pack complete with a personalised colour label (02), with images of the snack and drink they could have when they registered.

When they arrived at the launch, each delegate received a personalised kit that included:

- colour personalised label and name tag
- personalised book with the front cover printed in their favourite colour (03)
- personalised content inside the book
- personalised mousemat with the image from the invitation
- personalised entry form into the iPod prize draw.

It's not just name and colour that you can personalise. Opposite is a sample of a personalised letter/brochure (04) selling legal publishing services to law librarians. If the librarian is female the image on the cover is female legs. If the librarian is male, the image on the front of the brochure is male.

## Mail makes customers smile

The creative font technologies that are getting outstanding results here, in Europe and the US include DreamType and Direct Smile. They offer a completely new dimension in personalised print creativity.

You can manufacture your own fonts, or select from an existing font library. You can create pixels using any image you like – for example, flowers, birds, shells, people and anything your mind can imagine. And then you can print the fonts on any background you want.

A recent seminar was the first campaign in Australia to use Direct Smile fonts combined with XMPie website personalisation. The font was made of people and the message included a personalised website link for each postcard recipient, where they could download a PDF of the seminar brochure.

Apart from the creative opportunities, the real power of these font technologies is the results. Hundreds of people linked to their personal website within the first few hours of receiving the postcard – and the first booking came in under four hours of the first mail being delivered.

And recipients stick their postcards to their walls around their office, or on their fridge to show the world, because they love to see their own name printed creatively.

Another recent campaign in Australia used a creative personalised font on a postcard linked to a personalised website, and tested it against a traditional mail pack and standard website. The campaign was an invitation to retailers to participate in a competition where every \$100 of purchases was an entry into a \$25,000 prize.

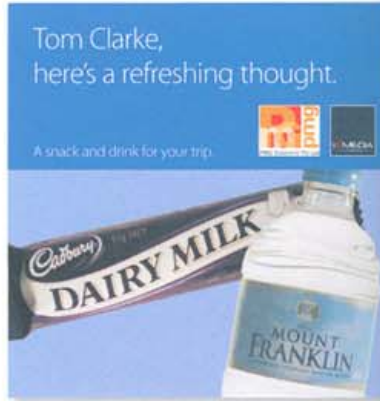
The standard mailing generated a five per cent response rate. The personalised mailing and website generated a 22.5 per cent response rate and a higher average value of purchases. That's a 450 per cent better response and the marketer estimated that they would have earned around \$2 million in additional revenue if all the mailings had been personalised.

01



i2media used a personalised mail piece to direct customers to a personalised website.

02



i2media also provided delegates with a personal travel pack which included a personalised colour label and images of the snack and drink they received when they registered.

03



At the launch delegates received a personalised kit which included a book with the front cover printed in the colour selected during the website registration.

DIRECT MAIL

As every 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.



04 The front cover of this brochure is personalised using gender-specific images of legs.



05 This Impact Mail piece used Marketing Week's Convergence logo in a creative way to highlight the wine tasting offer.

### Impact Mail gives more options to marketers

When the font technology is combined with Australia Post's new Impact Mail service the creative options grow even further. The piece above (05) used a Direct Smile font to promote wine tasting at the Ducor stand during Marketing Week, held in Adelaide.

The Impact Mail postcard (06) is the first Impact Mail piece to use specialised font technology and link respondents to a personalised website.

06



This Impact Mail piece is a postcard where the font is made up of dandelions seeds.

### Personalising the printed word

The high-end printers supplied by companies like Fuji Xerox, Hewlett Packard, Kodak and Xeikon mean the variety of print options is also far broader. You can print on paper sizes up to A2, manufacture envelopes using personalised content as the background image, and create posters, banners, brochures, magazine covers and more. And the stock on which you can print is as varied as the creative options – paper, card, vinyl, plastic and even canvas.

The printed word is here for the long haul. People prefer to read from paper rather than from a screen. It's also easier to read from paper than from a screen. You don't have to wait for downloads or scroll up and down to see the whole picture.

And if your printed words are the words your customer loves to hear – 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.

The beauty of variable data printing is the ability to test small quantities – you can print one or one million units. And as every marketer knows, testing is the key to profitable marketing.

So why not join the renaissance today? It won't cost you much to test the new technology, and the value you gain could completely change the way you do your marketing.

**You can download a copy of *The Direct Mail Renaissance* white paper at [www.malcolmaulldirect.com](http://www.malcolmaulldirect.com)**