

INSIDE Direct Mail

Your monthly resource for direct mail trends, tips and analysis

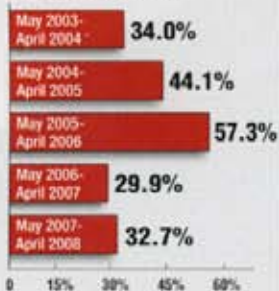
JULY 2008

Associations Integrate Channels

While the amount of mail coming from these groups is on the small side, the overall strategy and tactical execution is not lacking, including sudden booms

... page 18

% of repeat mail from associations



Penn-Environment Goes Local

... and more "Top Mailings," including United Farm Workers, Veer and St. Joseph's Indian School ... page 5



How to Get the BEST

ROI

FROM YOUR COPYWRITER

DURING RECESSIONARY TIMES

In the movie "Jerry McGuire," Cuba Gooding Jr.'s character Rod Tidwell says to Tom Cruise's Jerry over and over again throughout the film, "Show me the money." A frustrated Jerry McGuire understands exactly what he has to do and pleads with the exuberant Rod by saying, "Help me ... to help you."

That, in a nutshell, is the symbiotic relationship between a copywriter and direct marketer during the best of times. Needless to say, it's even more important to have such a relationship during the worst of times. With us headed full tilt into a recession, it's the time when we truly have to help each other ... page 12

11 Ways to Perk Up Your pURL Strategy

Using pURLs, mailers can avoid the unknown and measure every response. "The mailers themselves will be able to tell for the first time every single person who's going online, how often ... page 16

Anatomy of a Control

With its eight-page letter, *International Living's* long copy is still winning subscriber's hearts, 28 years later. The letter is part of what may be one of the longest ... page 14

Also Inside FirstUp: Gen Y ... page 4

PremiumWatch: Retailers ... page 11

StraightTalk: Susan Plonkey,

vice president, customer service, USPS ... page 22



A Creative Look at Engaging Customers

Veer uses an unconventional design to resonate with fellow creative professionals

The biggest favor any direct marketer can do for itself is to know its audience and produce a campaign that resonates with it. No one takes the time to sift through mail that simply looks like it's not for him or her.

For visual images and creative professional company Veer, that's the model it lives by. The creative members at the design firm—with locations in New York, California, Canada and Germany—have no trouble defining their audience. The people they market to are easy for them to understand because they're peers: fellow creative professionals in advertising, publishing and multimedia. As they well know, any old mail piece won't do to impress fellow designers.

Veer certainly takes that to heart in its latest special edition mail piece. Neither a

test nor control, the creative firm sent out a unique "Member Handbook" in April to a few hundred thousand select customers, and the mailing can hardly be considered a traditional direct mail solicitation. In a 5' x 7' yellow envelope, Veer uses a more subtle approach to get prospects inside (Archive code #836-672193-0804).

On one side, there's an elaborate crest, bearing an octopus with wings and images immersed throughout, as well as the seal copy, "THE VERY SECRET ORDER OF CREATIVES UNDERSTANDING." Below the crest is a cryptic quote: "The palette grows brightly at midnight."

Clearly, this mailer is about the work creatives do every day. It's an intricate, detailed design that leaves the prospect wanting more. On the reverse side, there's a small offer of what's inside, with the copy, "Solve riddles and save on

your next purchase of photography or type. Details inside." But the focus is on the crest—a visual which expresses to the prospect that this is something from a peer, not a faceless brand.

"I think people are intrigued by less of the \$49.95 and more of the 'What the heck's in here?'" explains Xerxes Irani, creative director of North America for Veer. "We want to be a peer of someone we're talking to. When we sit and talk to people, we hear how we're a bunch of guys. 'You guys do great work.' They don't ever talk about 'your brand is super-strong.' They look at us as a bunch of peers. And I think that's what the envelope does."

The creativity doesn't stop there. While the contents consist of just a single element—the Member Handbook—that piece alone has more innovative ideas than one can fathom. With the crest again on the outside, the brown handbook is loaded with creative appeals to engage the audience. It begins with a welcome note that incorporates the basic principles Veer stands on and uses clever copywriting in a tongue-in-cheek manner that flows throughout the booklet.

Using old-style writing from the early secret-society clubs of the 1800s and 1900s, the design exudes a nostalgic feel. The often brilliant, always funny text encapsulates every element, as copywriter Anders Svensson proves long copy can be just as interesting as pretty images.

"We took a chance. It's copy-heavy. It takes a bit to get into what we're talking about," explains Irani. "Someone can't just glance at it and get it. You have to spend some time with it."

That was something the members of Veer debated—the fact that some people may not take the time—but ultimately, they decided their audience would put forth the effort. Thanks to such great involvement devices as the rules of conduct, great moments in cre-



activity, secret handshakes, code phrases and, especially, the seven riddles, there's plenty for creatives to delve into.

The results have proven that Irani and his team made the right choice. According to the creative director, Veer has received many e-mails asking for more copies, and there have been blog and Twitter posts circulating the web about the handbook. Not to mention a positive ROI from response to the special offers, which are detailed on pages 22 and 23 of the booklet.

"People spend a lot of time with it," says Heather Parker, Veer director of marketing for North America. "People have been saying they spend all afternoon on this piece, which is great for us. They're connecting with us and engaging, whereas they may only spend a few minutes with a catalog or browsing through an online feature. We love the time investment that our audience is making with this piece."

One thing that is conspicuously absent

is any sort of reply form. Instead, on the inside front cover of the handbook, there is a URL, which also appears throughout, driving sales through the web. And that is by design, as well.

"We dropped reply forms and order forms once our ability to serve customers on the web became really much more efficient," describes Tracy Gauson, corporate communication and PR manager for Veer. "People really are going to the web much more, especially our audience. They need to surf and evaluate a lot of different products. That's best done through the web."

Just another way Veer connects with its audience. And once customers reach the website, they're encouraged to continue their involvement with the campaign. Veer has tie-ins on its site including an interac-

Idea In Action The Snowball Effect

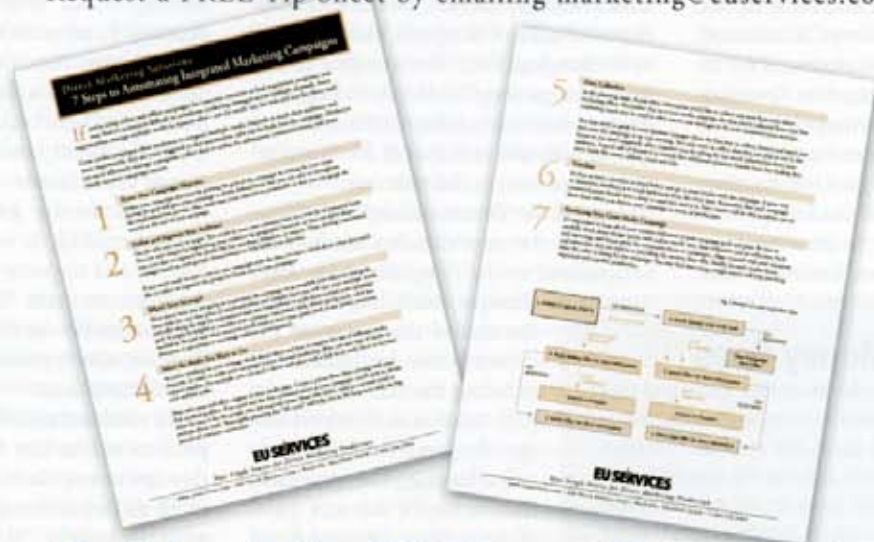
Mulling over a design can be a tedious task, but sometimes, one great idea can lead to another, and a unique, one-of-a-kind mail piece can be born. That's exactly what happened with visual images and creative professional company Veer for its Member Handbook campaign. "It actually was a concept that grew throughout," says Xerxes Irani, creative director for Veer. "The handshakes were first, and it just grew and grew. As [copywriter Anders Svensson] wrote, we designed." The result was a 24-page handbook full of creative design that has been causing quite a stir for Veer.

tive website dedicated to the Secret Order and widgets to download directly to the desktop in order to receive updates on a multitude of Veer products.

At the end of the day, the Member Handbook campaign strikes a resounding chord with its audience because it looks like something creative professionals would put together. Veer plans to expand the campaign in the future, adding more interactive features on the web and in the mailing itself, continuing to push the creative envelope for creative professionals. **IDM**

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