

MARKETING

Old School Marketing: Still Effective in the Social Media Age

by David Salisbury



Because of the focus on social media, it's easy to forget that conventional marketing channels like print and email are still highly effective - and in some cases, are becoming more effective.

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Companies increasingly rely on online and social media marketing to connect with modern audiences, jumping aboard trending hashtags, slang, memes, etc. However, as online content is getting more saturated and more companies compete, they're creating an endless mass of online content that's ever harder to build a brand in. Thus it's good to remember there are still tried-and-true classic means of advertising that remain exceedingly effective.

Direct Mail

Believe it or not, some people actually do read those junk mail leaflets, offers, and promotions. In fact, a lot of people do. Customer response rates increased over 40% in 2016. It's also comparable with social media marketing's return on investment, or ROI – Direct mail's ROI is 29%, only one percentile lower than that of social media. This could be due to direct mail landing directly into the hands of a person to read immediately, whereas the endless stream of advertisements popping up in a Facebook or Twitter news feed become static noise for the eyes and very little gets retained.

This is backed up by a 2015 United States Postal Service study that concluded readers gloss over digital media much quicker than with printed content. The study finds people take more time to read printed materials, build a stronger emotional investment in physical content, and will thus remember the advertising more effectively. Printed content also shows a larger effort on behalf of the marketer, creating more trust and belief in the ads than just quick posts added onto social media.

Email

It's odd to think we've reached a point in the digital age where electronic mail is considered "old school" and dated due to social media's instantaneous content creation. However, only the naïve believe it's time has passed. A McKinsey & Company study in 2019 found that email marketing is 40 times more effective and results in 3 times more sales than social media marketing. This is likely because people separate their business and financial worlds away from social media realms typically reserved to personal lives and leisure. More serious transactions like banking, job hunting, and professional correspondence are usually done via emails. Thus, pitching business and sales offers via email is a more logical avenue.

The number of people with email is expected to reach 3 billion next year. To consider email's marketing potential dead with numbers like that is downright foolhardy. Furthermore, email boasts an ROI of near 125% - over quadruple that of social media

marketing. Perhaps it's because older people with larger bank accounts stay true to email for business and financial transactions. The number of people using social media for financial decisions could increase as Gen Z and younger Millennials grow older. However, until then, email marketing is still clear financial gold.

Face-to-Face Networking

People connect with each other over social media sometimes having never met face to face. These relationships come and go frequently, often never resulting in a one-on-one meeting or interaction. Likely because simple text back and forth does not sustain an emotional investment in another person. This could also explain why face-to-face networking remains one of the most powerful ways of promoting one's brand, establishing invested relationships with business peers, and navigating the business landscape.

This is why industry workers of all stripes still travel the country and shell out registration fees to attend conferences where they get to meet potential new employers or partners. Over 80% of new hires are found through person-to-person networking and near 70% of entry-level professionals say in-person interactions create investment in a potential new company. This also explains why the numbers of entrepreneurs attempting to launch the next great company continue to grow at conferences like SXSW and TechCrunch Disrupt. If a business could explode with nothing more than a keyboard from a one-room apartment, there'd be no reason to leave the house. Digital still cannot beat the human touch.

However, there are rumblings that indeed the human touch could become obsolete. According to the CMR article **“Understanding the Role of Artificial Intelligence in Personalized Engagement Marketing,”** AI could offer personalization that can deliver better marketing results when done using AI mechanics and curation strategy. Social media marketing is already doing this by auto populating your news feed with products you might be interested in based on online searches. How honed in on a customer it will become is yet to be seen. Currently, however, old tactics still have plenty of power left in them.



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