



# The Rest of the Story

What Really Drives Customer Behavior



**CONVENTIONAL WISDOM** SURE, “DO NOT CALL” WAS A PAINFUL AND COSTLY SETBACK FOR THE DIRECT MARKETING INDUSTRY. BUT “DO NOT MAIL?” AIN’T GONNA HAPPEN.

**THE REST OF THE STORY** THE DO NOT MAIL MOVEMENT IS GAINING MOMENTUM AT AN ALARMING PACE. GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT SELF-REGULATION JUST MAY BE THE ONE DEFENSE THAT CAN KEEP IT FROM BECOMING A REALITY.

## Do Not Mail?

On the wall of his office in Washington, D.C., Steve Berry keeps a pair of maps depicting a growing trend. The map, labeled “2006,” shows only four red states; the 2007 version shows 15. Berry, the Executive Vice President for Government Affairs at the Direct Marketing Association (DMA), isn’t keeping track of Republican and Democratically controlled states. Rather, he’s following the progress of the Do Not Mail movement, with red states representing those in which bills to establish a Do Not Mail registry have been introduced.

“Do Not Mail would be an absolute disaster, not just for the mailing community, but for *all* marketers,” Berry says. “Historically, marketing is the process of reaching out to potential customers who may *or may not* have expressed a need for a particular product, informing them about how that product can help them solve a problem, or in some way enhance their lives, and then allowing them to decide whether they want to make a purchase,” he explains. “Direct mail is among the most productive media ever devised for doing just that. But it is totally dependent on marketers having ready access to marketing data. Do Not Mail would severely restrict that access.”

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## Bottoms Up!

I started my career as a copywriter at the Marsteller Advertising Agency in New York. At that time, Marsteller was among the top 20 ad agencies in the world, with billings of almost a half billion dollars—a whole lot of money in those days. Marsteller's client list included some of the top brands in the world. And the agency was known for producing smart, innovative, revenue-generating creative work.

Those of us on the creative side of the business were required to follow a pretty rigid routine: We were not to put pen to paper, not to write a single word, not to sketch even the most rudimentary layout until the account team prepared and presented us with a strategic brief stating the objective of the ad, mailing or commercial. It described the product—it's features, how it was made and its competition—in infinite detail. And finally, it identified those the account team believed represented its core audience. Usually the audience description ran a sentence or two, i.e.: "Status-conscious young men between 18 and 35."

I don't mean to say that the account people didn't do their homework—on many occasions, they even commissioned original research to help. But access to real, relevant, actionable information about the market was scarce.

Product then was King. And the general sense was that the key to a successful ad or mail campaign was finding the right combination of words, just the right graphic presentation, just the right tagline, that would set your product apart and compel hordes of consumers to buy. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't.

Today, the marketing equation has been turned upside down, or as we say, here at ALC, "Bottoms-up." We now

know the customer—not the product—is King. There really are, for better or worse, precious few truly unique products out there. Successful marketers have learned to begin the process with a solid, in-depth understanding of their customers and prospects. That customer insight and knowledge best informs and drives marketing strategy. In short, it's the data.

And that, in a nutshell, is the theme of this issue of *The Rest of the Story*. In it, you'll learn about the "Do Not Mail" movement and how self-regulation—in simple terms, listening to our customers and voluntarily respecting their rights as consumers—is our best bet to keep the legislative wolves from our door. The "It's the Data" column explores "Just-in-Time" marketing and may shed some light on how you can get your offer into the hands of your customers and prospects at the exact moment they're most likely to respond.

My hope is that, when you're done reading this edition, you'll think, "I didn't know that." Or maybe, "I knew it, but wasn't thinking about it in that way."

As always, I welcome your questions or comments. Feel free to contact me at [donn.rappaport@alc.com](mailto:donn.rappaport@alc.com) or at 609-580-2800.

Thanks for reading,

Donn Rappaport  
Chairman and CEO

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# Do Not Mail? Can't Happen Here? Don't Be Too Sure

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Donn Rappaport, ALC Chairman and CEO, and Chairman-elect of the DMA Board of Directors, explains the underlying problem with Do Not Mail this way: “Few people would actually say they like “junk mail.” On the other hand, people really *do* like to receive direct mail when it’s relevant and effectively targeted. We would expect large numbers of consumers who appreciate targeted mail—and respond to it enthusiastically—to mistakenly opt in to Do Not Mail.”

## Pushing the Do Not Mail threat

Berry goes on to describe the three-headed monster that, in his view, is responsible for the Do Not Mail threat: misguided privacy advocates, uninformed environmental watchdogs and state and federal legislators hoping to capture headlines and score some easy points by taking on the “junk mail” bugaboo.

“The irony of this,” states Rappaport, “is that we have made great strides over the years in improving our ability to target consumers so that the mail they do receive is increasingly relevant to them and, yes, even welcome in their mailboxes.”

Nevertheless, the Do Not Mail movement is gaining momentum; several additional states have formed committees to study the issues surrounding the perceived negative impact of direct mail, and the forces behind Do Not Mail are gaining traction, raising money and becoming increasingly aggressive.

In the face of this threat, the DMA, in concert with industry coalition the Mail Moves America, is preparing a marketing effort specifically geared to explain to con-

sumers how direct marketing in general and direct mail in particular work, how consumers benefit and why it’s good—even vital—for the country and the economy. Paraphrasing the famous prison warden’s line in the movie *Cool Hand Luke*, they believe that what we have here is a failure to communicate. And they aim to fix it.

But more is required to turn back the tide of regulation than a marketing campaign from industry proponents about the wonders of direct marketing. Serious, broadly embraced self-regulation that is carefully monitored and enforced must be mandatory. This thinking was the driving force behind a resolution the DMA Board of Directors recently passed focusing on the need for direct marketers to do a better job of respecting the increased desire among many consumers to exert at least some measure of control over the marketing messages directed at them (see “Responsibilities of Database Compilers: New Ethics Guidelines,” below).

Whether even that will keep the legislative wolves from the door is debatable. But there are examples of successful self-regulation in other industries, such as the household appliance standards promulgated by Underwriters Laboratories, the motion picture and television rating system and the voluntary ban of all television advertising for cigarettes.

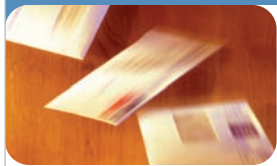
More to the point, there are major direct marketing organizations that *already* practice self-regulation on a level that goes considerably beyond the letter of the law. What’s more, they claim it is not only a solid defense but a smart offense. Respecting consumer choice, they say, is just good business.

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## Responsibilities of Database Compilers: New Ethics Guidelines

According to the DMA, database compilers should:

- ❖ Establish agreements with data users that clearly define how data should be used as well as what is and is not permissible; require customers to state the purpose for which the data will be used and to comply with all applicable laws and DMA guidelines.
- ❖ Suppress names of individuals who request it within a reasonable time so that these individuals do not appear on lists used by third-party marketers.
- ❖ Allow third-party marketers to reveal the compiler as the source of the marketer’s information.
- ❖ Explain to consumers who request it how they collect information used to compile their marketing databases.
- ❖ Randomly monitor, through seeding or other means, the appropriateness of customer uses of their marketing data.
- ❖ Immediately contact data users who use marketing data inappropriately and request compliance; refuse to allow further use of data until compliance is shown and refer continuing nonconforming uses to both the DMA and appropriate law enforcement agencies.



# Do Not Mail? Can't Happen Here?

## Don't Be Too Sure *Our industry must respect the rights of*



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

### Queen of suppression

Kim Haywood has worked for the March of Dimes (MOD) in White Plains, New York, her entire career, becoming Director of Database Marketing about a year ago. MOD is among the nation's largest charities. It mails more than 90 million pieces a year and has a 2007 revenue goal of \$60 million, of which about \$46 million will be raised from direct mail.

MOD also has a very extensive privacy policy. Among other things, the policy provides its donors with the ability to opt out of future mailings, or to choose the frequency and even content of mailings they receive from the organization.

"It's more than 'just take me off your circulation file,'" Haywood says. "We have as many as 20 different suppressions. If a donor wants us to solicit them in September but not October, November or December, we'll do that. If they don't want to be acknowledged, we don't acknowledge them. If they want to be contacted for our 'Mothers March' in February, but not in November, we'll do that. Our strategy is driven specifically by what our donors indicate they want."

Do all these suppressions cost more or hurt fundraising effectiveness? "Certainly, all marketers, including us, need to reach their revenue goals," Haywood answers. "The interesting thing is that, contrary to suppressing financial

support, we believe these policies actually lead to even greater donor retention and giving."

### King of the kitchen

On the opposite side of the country, Pat Connelly orchestrates the marketing efforts of Williams-Sonoma. Telling a different story, he nevertheless comes to the same basic conclusion. Connelly, whose tenure at the giant kitchen supply company spans 28 years, is the company's Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer as well as a member of the DMA Board of Directors.

"As an industry, we need to be much more open regarding how customers want to receive mail from us and make it easier for them to choose, even if that means they don't want to receive as much—or even any—mail from us," he asserts. "If we don't govern ourselves, we'll be subjected to state-by-state regulation or federal legislation that governs us. That would not be a good scenario."

Connelly points out the difference between the recent DMA resolution on consumer choice and previous guidelines. "Historically, the DMA and almost all marketers have let customers choose whether they wanted their names and other information to be shared with third parties," he says. "But it's been a pretty open field in terms of how we communicate, and how often, with our own customers. We haven't been too open in terms of saying, 'if you don't want to get any mail from us, even though you're a customer, that's fine, or if you only want to get one catalog every quarter, that's O.K.'"

In short, the time has come to give customers some measure of control over the mail they receive. "The financial services industry has been good about providing an opt-out choice," notes Connelly, "and the fact of the matter is that not many customers opt out. But allowing them to do so gives you the chance to remove the minority—those who do not want to be solicited—from your mail stream. That's a lot better than being forced to do something by a state patchwork quilt of laws that, in effect, would be a tyranny of the minority."

He adds that the direct marketing industry, like most industries, is conservative at its core; that is, resistant to change. He cites mailing analysis as an example. "When we do a mailing, we look at the quantity we mailed and how many orders we got," he says. "Until recently, we haven't looked at all 13 mailings to our customer base in a given year and calculated what would have happened if we'd only mailed 12. Actually, we mail so often that one

consumers without exception

more mailing may not add that much business incrementally. If you look at mailing 'X' on its own, it might look fine, but more analysis shows that it took a little bit away from the mailings around it, and so it really wasn't that productive."

As a result of this longitudinal analysis, Williams-Sonoma has cut an entire mailing out of its cycle and begun to create smaller, more focused catalogs for specific customer segments. "It turns out that these steps, while geared to making us more compliant to the wishes of our customers, also save us money and increase response rates," Connelly concludes.

### Hang together or hang separately

The DMA Board's ethics resolutions advance the cause of consumer choice significantly. And in an effort to give the guidelines real teeth, the association is mandating 100% compliance from its members. As part of its annual membership renewal, the CEO or the chief marketing executive of every DMA member company will be asked to verify that his or her organization is in compliance with the guidelines. What's more, the DMA intends to beef up its ability to monitor compliance throughout the industry.

"This act of self-regulation is our best bet for stemming the tide of pending Do Not Mail legislation," says Rappaport. "We have got to be in a position to go to Washington and say, without hesitation and without compromise, 'Our industry respects the rights of consumers without exception, and, therefore, we do not need additional legislation to govern us.'"

Those direct marketers who believe that stubborn resistance and clinging to the old way of doing things is the best course, though, might want to heed Connelly's warning: "The precedent for this is the Do Not Call list, which was immensely popular in Congress and has been just as popular with consumers. We don't want to go there with mail." No, we don't. ■



**WHAT'S YOUR STORY?** TELL US ABOUT AN EXPERIENCE YOU'VE HAD THAT OPENED YOUR EYES TO THE TRUTH ABOUT MARKETING. SEND YOUR STORY TO [ROS@ALC.COM](mailto:ROS@ALC.COM).

## Bottoms-Up Marketing: Lead with Your Data

**T**echnological improvements allow marketers to target their core constituencies with ever-greater efficiency. They are enjoying an unprecedented ability to access a customer's interests, preferences, past purchase history and even future inclinations. Yet, to a large extent, the true potential of focused, customized marketing remains mostly unrealized.

That, according to ALC Chairman and CEO Donn Rappaport, is because many marketers are stuck in an outmoded paradigm. "Most of us were taught that the starting point for all marketing was a solid strategic plan," he says. "Sure, we used market research to support the plan. But we did not have access to—or the ability to utilize—the level of sophisticated customer analysis we currently have. Consequently, our marketing strategy was somewhat hypothetical and, relatively speaking, hit or miss."

In the past, marketers developed a control offer, as well as a few additional test offers, and went to market. List selection was one part art, one part science and two parts wishful thinking. If one of four files you tested pulled well, you had a pretty good chance of success. Today, costs are higher, response rates are lower and there is more competition than ever before. In the current environment, marketers *must* do better.

"Currently," Rappaport explains, "marketers have the ability to gain a truly intimate knowledge of their customers; they not only can access past purchase history, but a wealth of demographic, psychographic, behavioral and even attitudinal information about them. And since they are able to integrate data from a variety of sources, both proprietary and acquired, they can even access that kind of information about prospects; people who have yet to make a purchase from them."

To that end, ALC has developed and is employing a new research and analytics platform designed to isolate the segments within a client's customer and prospect base (see "Customer/Prospect Research and Analytics Platform," below), which then drives the strategic elements of a highly targeted campaign.

### Customer/Prospect Research and Analytics Platform



At ALC, the program is referred to as "Bottoms-Up Marketing," and it is specifically designed to enable direct marketers to not only structure the most appealing, compelling offers, but to do it simultaneously for one or many customer segments. In short, according to Rappaport, it enables marketers to speak to each customer or prospect about the things he or she cares about most, in a language in which he or she is most likely to respond.

To learn more about Bottoms-Up Marketing, contact Owen McCorry, President, Customer Acquisition Services, 609-580-2800 or [owen.mccorry@alc.com](mailto:owen.mccorry@alc.com).



### CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

SMART DIRECT MARKETING BEGINS WITH GOOD STRATEGY; GOOD STRATEGY LEADS TO ON-POINT CREATIVE, AND IN TURN INFORMS MEDIA PLANNING. THEN—AND ONLY THEN—DO YOU TURN YOUR ATTENTION TO THE LIST.

### THE REST OF THE STORY

EFFECTIVE MARKETING MUST START WITH THE DATA. THOROUGH CUSTOMER ANALYSIS, PROFILING AND MODELING DRIVE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIC AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT.



# The Power of “Just in Time” Marketing *In an age of instant gratifi*



**CONVENTIONAL WISDOM** 30-DAY HOTLINES ARE THE ULTIMATE IN REGENCY. IS THERE REALLY ANY POINT IN TRYING TO REACH THEM SOONER?

**THE REST OF THE STORY** “JUST IN TIME” MARKETING MEANS REACHING CUSTOMERS AND PROSPECTS AT THE EXACT MOMENT WHEN THEY ARE MOST LIKELY TO BUY.

“I never go grocery shopping when I’m hungry, says Darren Amato, Vice President, Compilation and Direct Sales at ALC. “Why? Because when I’m hungry, everything looks good to me,” he explains. And that’s the thinking behind a fresh concept in direct marketing, the ALC executive refers to as “Just in Time” marketing.

“We’ve always strived to close the recency gap,” adds Marianne DiLoreto, Client Marketing Manager at ALC. “Not too long ago, 90-day hotlines were the norm. Then we had 60-day, and more recently, 30-day hotlines. In fact, testing demonstrated without doubt that the fresher a record was, the higher the response rate tended to be.

**The magic occurs when data combined with the *right* offer, couched in the *right* terms, identifies and reaches the *right* prospect at the *right* time.**

That’s because a response to one particular offer predicted a predisposition to additional, related offers,” she explains. A recent subscription to *Better Homes and Gardens*, for example, is predictive of an interest in housewares, home furnishings, home insurance and more.

The question was, “how close could recency be cut?” For a long time, the 30-day hotline was the industry’s “four-minute mile.” The idea of breaking that barrier was impractical primarily due to the expense and capacity requirements of updating data files on a weekly, much less daily, basis.

### Closing the recency gap

But all that is changing. Increasingly rapid technology, including web-enabled daily and weekly data updates,

is quickly closing the gap between a prospect’s optimum moment of response and when a marketer can get his or her hands on the data.

And savvy sellers are discovering that specific major life events, such as getting married, having a baby, moving into a new home or starting a business, trigger significant purchase cycles. Being first in the mailbox when these events occur—or even *before* they happen—is a powerful strategy for winning *new* customers, who often remain loyal to a brand or product for years.

If anticipating major purchasing patterns sounds like foretelling the future, a conjurer’s trick, think again. Empirical data is being generated by ALC and other researchers to quantify the impact of life-changing events on the purchasing activity of various lifestyle segments. Engaged couples, for example, leave a data trail for up to 15 months before they tie the knot. New business owners raise their hands by filing necessary paperwork with either their state’s attorney general’s office or with county or city authorities. New homeowners, or at least new home locations, are identified months or years in advance on plot and street plans filed with the U.S. Post Office (USPS) and utility providers.

The magic occurs when data combined with the *right* offer, couched in the *right* terms, identifies and reaches the *right* prospect at the *right* time.

### Home is where the money is

The new homeowner market is a good case study. These prospects are certainly worth pursuing: New movers spend \$102 billion annually—five times more than settled homeowners.

“There are as many as 40 data suppliers offering ways to contact this one market,” notes Amato. Generally, new homeowner data comes from three different sources: deed files, telephone company 411 updates and the USPS. Deed files are rich in information, such as the mortgage amount and property description, but can often take weeks to months before landing on a prospect list. There are 3,800 counties in the U.S. and they record data at different speeds and distribute it in different time frames. Telephone directory assistance files are more frequently updated, but since the 411 suppliers are separate companies from the service providers, it can take as long as 10 days to two weeks before directory assistance serving Vermont, for example, loads the new phone data on a move from Florida to California.

*ation, 30-day-old data just doesn't cut it anymore.*

USPS files generally are the most complete, because developers must lay out and name streets and supply addresses for lots long before the first shovel full of dirt is turned. These new locations go into USPS databases and are marked as unoccupied, remaining dormant until the letter carrier on the route identifies them as lived in. Then, the address is activated and goes into the "live" database. However, only a small number of list providers have full access to the weekly data, because a list suppli-

names and locations each month. Supporting the case for maximum recency, a quarter of Accutrend's clients use overnight data; the balance mail on weekly or monthly cycles, and "mail" is the correct verb. Spam filters and other security programs severely hamper marketers' ability to use the web as



**The Milestones new mover file, for instance, provides one of the nation's largest home-entertainment companies with Just-in-Time new mover data for promotions that actually can reach the prospects' mailbox before they close on their new house.**

er must provide the USPS with 90% of the names in a given state before it will fill in the missing 10%.

These weekly and even daily updates enable marketers with the right message and product to hit home runs. The Milestones new mover file, for instance, provides one of the nation's largest home-entertainment companies with just-in-time new mover data for promotions that actually can reach the prospects' mailbox before they close on their new house.

### **The business of America is new business**

Take a look at new business startups, and you'll see a similar picture. No other nation tops the U.S. in new business startups. Last year alone, more than 2.4 million new enterprises opened their doors, and every one of them needed a long list of supplies and services, ranging from telephone service to business cards to desk chairs and potted plants.

More than 19 years ago, Vicki Reavis recognized that fact and started to compile data on new business formations. Her firm, Accutrend Data Corporation, is now among the largest suppliers of business-to-business marketing data. "We've evolved from delivering addresses on pressure-sensitive labels to floppy disks to database downloads every 24 hours," Reavis says. Accutrend acquires data directly from state agencies, cities and counties. Daily updates are carefully checked against the master file for duplication, a must given rising postal costs.

Accutrend compiles about 270,000 new business

effectively for prospecting as direct mail. Many of her clients are financial service providers, such as banks, credit card companies and insurance firms. Along with office supply companies, printers and furniture retailers, these make up the vast majority of business-to-business marketing efforts.

DiLoreto thinks that marketers are overlooking another important aspect of the new business start-up market. "Not only are there the obvious B2B applications, but for these folks are as consumers, as well," she explains. "Few marketers approach new business owners as consumers," she notes, "but our research shows that they are twice as likely as others to buy a recreational vehicle, twice as likely to buy a new car, one-and-a-half times as likely to install a home security system and three times as likely to do renovation work on their home. They are a rich prospect database for all kinds of offers well beyond their business needs."

But regardless of the market segment you're attempting to reach, both Reavis and DiLoreto agree that the key is to get your message in your prospect's hands when he or she is most likely to respond. And that's Just in Time. ■



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# The Creative Value of Data



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**Nina LaFrance**, Forbes Magazine; **Fran Green**, President, ALC Data Management



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This year's 11th annual ALC For Brokers Only luncheon took place on May 2, 2007 at the beautiful Lighthouse at Chelsea Piers restaurant in New York City. More than 150 brokers attended the event, which was co-sponsored by 21 list owners. "The objective of the luncheon is to provide an opportunity for ALC Data Management and our list owners to network with key brokers, share ideas, promote our lists and encourage their ongoing support," notes Fran Green, President of Data Management of ALC and organizer of the luncheon and program.

This year, the theme was "creativity." Keynote speaker Ann Hallock, Creative Director of Family and Children's Magazines, Disney Publishing, which produces *FamilyFun*, *Wondertime* and *Disney Adventures* magazines, spoke about creativity in the workplace and the creative development of the Disney titles. She then led the attendees in an exercise to unlock their inner creativity.

In addition to the education offered by Hallock, the lavish food, live entertainment, prize drawings and

networking opportunities, there was a core message from ALC Chairman and CEO Donn Rappaport regarding the future of the industry. "The route to successful modern marketing is data," he noted. "It's about bringing buyers and sellers together in an environment conducive to selling." But, he added, list professionals will have to abandon their tactical mindset to succeed. "Why are we boxed into a technical and administrative roles instead of strategy?" he continued. "Why can't we take a strategic place at the marketing table? If we get so tied up with the technical part of our jobs, clients can't help but see us as a commodity... Data is not something you check off when you're done with creative strategy."

According to Green, the For Brokers Only event has become a staple franchise for ALC. "No one else does anything like it," she asserts. "Though the ultimate decision about what to mail rests with the marketer, close to 85% of our orders come through the brokerage community. For Brokers Only is a way for ALC, and our list owners, to say 'thank you' to the brokers." ■

*The Rest of the Story* (copyright © ALC 2007) is a quarterly look behind the headlines, published by ALC. A leading direct marketing services provider, ALC is dedicated to enabling our clients to grow, acquire market share, and maximize bottom-line profitability through the innovative use of marketing data. *The Rest of the Story* is specifically geared to enable ALC clients to keep abreast of news, information, social patterns and industry trends shaping the world of direct response marketing. Here you'll find ideas and insights you just won't find anywhere else—strategy you can put right to work to help you acquire new customers more profitably and maximize the lifetime value of each and every one.



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