



Editorial

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DONN RAPPAPORT, this year's DMA chairman, is a gently compelling speaker, keen on metaphor – his speech at last week's DMA 07 Conference and Exhibition in Chicago ran the gamut from turtles playing possum to moving trains.

The latter described the DM industry's reaction to the do-not-call registry – hanging to the back of the train, trying to stop it from leaving the station. With do-not-mail bills under consideration in 15 states, he urged members to lay tracks in front of this train in order to have some say in its route.

A key message throughout the conference was self-regulation – one that many aspects of the marketing industry have embraced to great effect. In his farewell address as this past year's DMA chairman, Markus Wilhelm's tone was grave when he discussed do-not-mail and rate cases.

But, as one well-respected veteran pointed out afterwards, “No mailer has ever wanted to mail credit card offers to an 8-year-old kid.” The urgency surrounding the issue may be new, but the fact remains that quite aside from legislation, it's a tremendous waste to target the wrong people.

In its newly launched Commitment to Consumer Choice, the DMA urges that mailers clearly show recipients how to modify future communications, and disclose where they got the recipient's name on request – again, practices that many marketers employ anyway. What's new is that consumer marketers will now be required to use the DMA's Mail Preference Service name-removal file every month, instead of quarterly.

Many marketers were sanguine about the DNC introduction, saying that it helped better focus their telephone communications to customers who were the most interested in their services. But Rappaport's comments paint a more anguished picture, and he for one is not letting the train leave without him.

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