



Triggers When to mail - why now? by David Bancroft Avrick

For years everyone in the industry has conducted seasonal tests. The professionals know the 'best times to mail' depending on whether they're mailing a catalog, asking for a donation or trying to sell a diet pill.

Most companies that rely on direct mail have elaborate charts that indicate the reduction in response, from 'prime time' on a monthly basis ... and they use those statistics to determine whether to remail the same name again with basically the same offer (often a catalog with a different cover).

Most sophisticated non-catalog, non-philanthropic mailers send out monthly mailings to take advantage of the added responsiveness created by mailing 30-day 'hotline' mailing lists.

But that's not the whole story. There are events that occur in a person's life that trigger responsiveness.

Two obvious triggers are having a new baby and moving to a new home. Each of these life-events creates a need for a wide variety of new products and services. These would include a new crib for the baby, and possibly a lawn or pool service for the new home.

In addition to generating specific needs, these 'events' make a consumer more responsive to direct mail in general. I've written an extensive article entitled "Why new move mailing lists work" (you can read it at davidavrick.com) which details the psychological factors that create this mail receptiveness.

Similar psychological factors create unique 'mailing cycles'. The perfect time to sell you a Medicare supplement insurance policy is just before you turn 65 - regardless of the month of the year. When the company you work merges, or is acquired by another firm, that's the best time to try to sell you a subscription to a business newsletter or magazine.

The Apollo new credit card issue mailing list is a great case in point. Yes, the names are a 'hotline' because the consumer just responded to a direct mail bankcard solicitation; but this type of mailing list also works because it's a triggering event in the consumer's life. All of the sudden he has 'new credit' and is thinking about buying 'stuff'.

If your trigger mailing can answer the question: "WHY NOW?" it will be much more successful. If your Medicare supplement mailing says; "because you're about to turn 65 and begin participating in Medicare" it's going to resonate with the reader. If your mailing talks about "you're going off to school shortly" or "if you take advantage of this offer before your birthday next month you will save..." you're on your way to increased response.

It's because we know that triggers 'work' that many specialized lists are created, such as new moves, new credit card issues, new business filings, birthdays, new births and even new bankruptcy filings. Rather than simply thinking about the 'best months to mail' or 'hotline names' ... start thinking about how you can use triggers to improve your direct mail campaign.