

# How to Fail in New Media

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SIX STRATEGIES TO KEEP IN MIND



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## SIX STRATEGIES TO KEEP IN MIND

Emerging technologies, multiplying media and new methodologies give you more opportunities to get your marketing messages across in dramatic new ways. In addition, new media give you the opportunity to cost effectively create additional brand experiences that reinforce your image.

Unfortunately, new technologies also give you greater opportunities to become the subject of one of those entertaining stories of high-tech failure we love retelling. And that's not so terrific.

How you choose and use your media is at least as important as what messages you transmit through them. The problem is, when the media are new, you cannot tell which will help you and which will send you down in colorful flames. And, maybe even more important, which *combinations* of media will give you better returns.

When done correctly, a good mix of media gives your message resonance. The marketing-speak term is "message synergy." But think of delivering your message through additional media as a resonance chamber to amplify your presence. The question is, which combinations of media will amplify your message to its maximum power?

In answering that question, you need to keep your goals constantly in mind. Your choice of media largely depends on whether your goal is to maximize ROI, exert control over your lead flow and lead quality, increase awareness, or gather information about your market.

### KNOW YOUR GOAL

To start with, make sure you're controlling what you want your media to do. Don't let the latest medium control your business plans. In almost every case, your marketing sits in a particular spot along a continuum from awareness to lead generation.

If a versatile new technology comes out that does everything — lead generation, awareness, making the sale — great. Make sure you *balance* what you are asking that medium to do against your goal, whether your goal involves just one or some combination of both. The medium should serve your goals, not the other way around.

### REMEMBER: ALL LEADS ARE *NOT* GENERATED EQUAL

Wherever your goal lies along the leads-awareness continuum, not all media will give you the same kinds of results. Think about the various ways we interact with each medium and you'll see what I mean. A mail package allows your recipient to hold a tangible document in his or her hands. The physical document addressed to the audience tends to put the reader in a particular frame of mind. You can think of many of the new media as good tools to get the prospect ready to see your offering when you deliver it.

Let's take a look at some of the ways the medium changes the nature of your leads:

#### Quality

Different media will tend to generate different degrees of quality in your leads. A banner ad will give your prospect less information than a BlackBerry message, which will be shorter than an email, and so on. So, the degree of investment in responding to each tends to increase with the substance and content of the medium. When your space is limited, the information you choose to share will invariably be the dial for turning the lead quality up ("Your G-9000 Infrastructure is

about to blow!”) — possibly at the expense of quantity — or turning your quality down (“Get a FREE iPod! Now!”).

## Quantity

Not too many people have video capacity on their cell phones. Even if you could get your hands on that list, you’d still have very few names for your nifty SMS campaign with the perfectly targeted video clip. So remember, your definition of “luddite” may be someone else’s definition of “early adopter.” Just because a new medium is cool doesn’t make it a good — or popular — marketing tool.

## Flow Control

The more personal the medium, the better you can control the flow of your responses. With an impersonal medium like television, you can expect a spike around the time of broadcast. But how much of a spike? How long? You can control these in broad strokes with TV or radio, but you have little chance for fine tuning. On the other hand, with a more directed medium like mail or email, you can control behavior much more precisely through targeted messaging, timing, creative and offer.

When considering which media to use, make sure you match your product and how you sell it with the medium. If you created an email message, or worse, a BlackBerry message the same way you’d create a postal letter, you’d be setting yourself up for failure.

## MATCH THE MEDIUM WITH THE MONEY

Before you spend your first dollar in any medium, make sure you’re going to get something more than a dollar back from it. A spreadsheet can help you model what a dollar spent can bring back in any particular medium. Here’s a simple example of a cost-per-sale spreadsheet that shows possible return on investment for various hypothetical media campaigns:

ROI Totals – based on campaign worksheets:				
Medium	Cost per touch	CPM	Cost per sale*	ROI
Direct Mail	\$0.75	\$750.00	\$723.98	8.3 : 1
Email house	\$.10	\$95.00	\$372.55	16.1 : 1
Email Purchase	\$0.40	\$400.00	\$6,274.51	1.0 : 1
E-Newsletter	\$0.01	\$11.00	\$3,666.67	1.6 : 1
Banner Ads	\$0.01	\$10.00	\$1,960.78	3.1 : 1
<b>Average Value of Sale: \$6,000.00</b>				

\* These numbers are meant to be illustrative of how to think about evaluating various media for use in an overall plan. Response rates and conversion rates will vary and be dependent upon market, product, offer, placement and other similar kinds of factors. This sample chart has been calculated based on a series of conversions, e.g. response rate, qualified lead rate, rate of appointment and close rate.

After taking a look at the chart, you might ask, “Why would I do anything other than email to a house list? It gives me a much better return on my investment than anything else.” There are a couple of things you’ll want to consider here. First, your house list is going to limit your universe of prospects. Notice in this sample that email to purchased lists has a 1:1 ROI — a wash. This is where message synergy and resonance come in. You have the opportunity to test how an

email touch can reinforce a targeted banner ad at a related site when combined with a direct mail piece. Will it improve cost per sale?

To arrive at good answers to this kind of question, you need to test.

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE TEST

Now that you've considered the kind, number, quality and return on various media, you need to ask yourself what is your most urgent need among the goals you've been keeping in mind. From your first investment do you want:

- **The best ROI** possible?
- **Maximum control** over lead flow?
- **Highest quality** of leads?
- **The right number** of leads?
- **A ton of awareness** in the marketplace?
- **Powerful intelligence** about your target audience?

Of course, your answer is "all of the above." But that's where it becomes important not to let the medium drive your goals. Presumably, you started out your program with needs. Stick with those and then ask yourself the question again.

When you have the answer, you're ready to start testing to get to that goal.

## CONTROL YOUR INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

Self control is as important in testing as it is in choosing your goals — if not more so. You need to make sure you know *what* you need to learn. It's wonderful to know that your audience prefers a FREE Glow Pen to a White Paper, but that doesn't help you determine which media will work together to close the deal. Make sure you structure your test to give you useful media intelligence like:

- Which media work harder for your product as **stand-alone** lead sources?
- Which media work better **in concert**?
- Which media create **more sales-ready leads**?
- What media combinations give you the **lead flow timing** you need?

Once you know which questions you want to ask, it's relatively easy to put together a test, or a series of tests, to get you to the answers. You'll need to establish the specifics of your testing yourself, but there are a few best practices you'll want to follow in your program.

### Use a control group . . . if you can.

If you have adequate numbers, set aside a control group that receives no marketing. This way, you'll be able to tell if marketing does any good at all. Only do this if you're confident that you have the numbers. If you're mailing rental lists and you have little or no recognition in the marketplace, you may not want to use a control group, as it will probably show little activity and be meaningless, or worse, wildly optimistic.

## Keep your media combinations separate

If you're using geographically identifiable media, regions are a natural way to test media mixes. To get meaningful results back from your test, you'll need to know that only the combinations you intend to send are being received. For instance, if you're adding B2B marketing using mobile devices to the mix, it might be a good idea to conduct that test in urban areas where there's more likely to be coverage and an audience that uses the technology. One factor you need to keep in mind when dividing your test geographically is the fact that different regions may respond differently to various approaches. For instance, prospects in the southern United States may take offense at some approaches that might resonate to a New York audience. Or, on an even more local basis, rural sections of a state may resent the attention paid to the big urban centers. The specifics of these differences vary depending on the region, but you'd be well served to keep them in mind.

## Include single-medium tests

You can't tell which combinations help unless you know how well your media do individually. So, wherever you test a combination you think will work, remember to include cells for each part of the combination alone. That way you can tell which specific medium is helping and by how much.

## Keep your playing field level

To get results that tell you anything about your media performance, everything else must be as equal as possible. Make sure you're not contaminating your test. Maintain control, right down to your copy points. Your well-conceived media test will be a waste of your time if one medium focuses on a fear message while another uses greed to sell. And even more important, make sure to keep your offers consistent across media. If you offer movie tickets online, don't offer a coffee mug in the mail.

The best way to conduct a test of multiple media combinations would be all at once. That way, external events like market changes won't skew your results from one test to the other. But if you don't have the budget, the list or the geographical market space to do that all at once, create a schedule and stick to it.

## KEEP TRACK OF YOUR TRACKING

There's a virtually infinite number of ways to track response. It's part of your genius as a marketer that you make your tracking systems fit your sales process and your product or service. But, no matter what media you are using, you need to make sure your tracking system follows a couple of basic tenets. And you'd be surprised at how many marketers who otherwise really are geniuses forget to consider these basic tracking laws:

- 1** Make sure you can track each response back to its media source and its individual test segment (e.g. offer or copy platform). If you can't track your test, you don't have a test. You have a bunch of responses.
- 2** Transmit all your leads to the sales force in a uniform fashion. If you don't, you'll generate inconsistent sales numbers from medium to medium not based on the actual performance, but based on things like how your sales team likes leads delivered. So, if you send all your qualified Web responses to your sales team by email but bring them hard copies of mail responses, you'll skew your results. Usually, there are five basic modes

of response. They are:

- Drive to a **Web site**
- Drive to **phone**
- Respond via **mail** (Business Reply Card or Envelope)
- Respond by **fax**
- Drive to a **retail** location

Here are some tips to keep leads consistent on the back end so they can be scored, routed, followed up on, and reported in the same way, regardless of the medium that generated the response. Using these methods, you're safeguarding your system against skewed results and blatant attempts at fraud.

### Drive to retail

Drive to retail is really its own variety of response mechanism, since the response is the prospect showing up at the store. Drive to retail is heavily reliant on coordination with your point-of-sale systems. And in that, nearly every situation is unique. So, we won't go into depth about it.

### Web site response

Assign each responder a unique identifier code to gain entry into the Web site. This allows you to keep track of your offers and responders. For those who lose their code, allow for a guest path (without an offer).

### Inbound call

To keep your back end consistent, give your telephone operators access to a "back door" into the Web site response-capture site. This way, they can enter identifier codes and information so that it's in the same format as Web responses.

### Business reply and fax

Both of these should be entered into the same Web site capture form and delivered to the sales team in the same format.

Regardless of the medium, one of the wonderful things about direct marketing is that you can rely on human beings to respond to certain approaches in a generally predictable manner. Never lose sight of that. No matter how startlingly new the media, or how dazzling the technology, the person at the other end is still a person, and the laws of direct still apply in terms of strategies, tactics, testing, response capture and tracking.