Responding to tough times

How BM Design & Advertising is finding new customers with a series of three high-impact mailshots

The background
Oxfordshire-based design and marketing company BM Design & Advertising (www.bm-group.co.uk) was launched in 2006 by friends Andrew Boyle and Charles News. Andrew’s background is in graphic design, advertising and marketing while Charles specialises in web design and build. Both having extensive experience in the sector, they’d decided to set up a business that offered design and advertising solutions in both print and online to small and medium-sized businesses in the Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Wiltshire area. Managing director Andrew Boyle explains their business to date, ‘We’ve grown steadily in our first three years, we have three members of staff and over 30 clients from a wide range of sectors and turnover is £150,000 and growing.’

Like all businesses, BM Design & Advertising has not been immune to the tough market conditions in 2008 and 2009. However, they’ve taken a proactive approach to combating them, as Andrew explains, ‘We’ve noticed some decline in clients but we have actively looked for new business to compensate for that, and that’s where Royal Mail’s Mailshots Online comes in.’

Reaching potential customers
Andrew decided to use Royal Mail’s Mailshots Online (www.mailshotsonline.com) to find new customers. ‘I wanted to achieve a steady influx of new, sustainable business – to find customers that we can build a lasting relationship with.’ Andrew felt this was the most effective way to achieve his goals. ‘I chose to send a mailshot because at 55p per postcard it has a really low unit cost and the slick and professional finish puts us in a very good light. Mailshots Online is really easy to use and very intuitive, I upload a PDF and my mailshot is ready in less than five minutes.’

Andrew created a series of three A5 postcard mailshots to encourage businesses new to the area to use their services. ‘The campaign was designed to make businesses realise...’
"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change"

Charles Darwin

that in tough trading conditions they should be investing in design and advertising to pull in new business,’ maintains Andrew. The three postcards re-emphasised this message with different creative executions: the first an image of a Galapagos tortoise with a Charles Darwin quote: ‘It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent but the one most responsive to change’, the second a Donald Trump quote: ‘When things aren’t working it’s time to mix it up’, and an image of a food blender, and the third a Winston Churchill quote: ‘The optimist sees opportunity in every danger; the pessimist sees danger in every opportunity’, and an image of a British bulldog.

The A5 postcards all featured the firm’s bright orange brand logo to build recognition, and prominently placed contact details. Andrew also included two strong incentives to new customers; a 20% discount on their first order, and a money-back guarantee if they aren’t completely happy with the work carried out. ‘I felt it was really important to incentivise the mailshot to really give people a reason to try us, and the money-back guarantee is there to help new customers trust us, we want them to be 100% happy.’

Targeting new businesses

Andrew receives the details of around 60 businesses new to the Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Wiltshire area each month. He adds those names to his database of existing business in the area he has from a mailing house. Since February 2009 he’s been sending out the postcards. He’s sent around 600 postcards a month, 200 of each design. Recipients receive one a month, first Darwin, then Trump, then Churchill, all with the 20% discount and money-back guarantee. After that BM Design & Advertising doesn’t contact them again.

Andrew and Charles have found six new clients – a 15% expansion of their customer base – in just six months. ‘This is a good Return On Investment for us,’ says Andrew. ‘We’re finding sustainable, long-term clients that provide a good level of profitable income. The ROI is much better than other avenues we could pursue like print, the mailshots are definitely making a noticeable difference to our bottom line in these challenging conditions.’

1. Make the message relevant
Tailor your message to your audience, and think about what would really interest them. Andrew focused on the tough market conditions because he knew everyone is experiencing the same challenges. Think about the benefit to your customer of working with your business and make that the main message of the mailshot.

2. Give an incentive
Incentivising your mailshot with a discount or other promotion gives the recipient another reason to try your business so always look for a way to incentivise. You might think about a percentage discount, buy one get one free offer or setting up a loyalty scheme for repeat customers.

3. Make your design stand out
The design is crucial to encourage recipients to read your mailshot, so always include good quality images, logos and your brand colours to build recognition with the customer. Make sure the response mechanism - which might be a web address, email address or phone number – is clearly visible.

4. Set a deadline
Running incentives for ‘a limited time only’ encourages new customers to get in touch and take advantage of any offers available. Set deadlines to any offers and make sure you have the capacity to deal with an influx of customers.

5. Build trust
If you’re looking to establish a relationship with new customers think about offering ‘money-back’ or ‘satisfaction’ guarantees that help to build trust. If they know you have their best interests at heart, they’ll be more likely to become your customer in the first place.