

Mailmark is helping a small mailing house make their clients' marketing more efficient

Background

BBS are a small, privately run mailing house and software development company based in Chester. Trading since 1980, their heartland is running event driven marketing campaigns for over 400 SME retail clients, as well as other sectors such as charities and theatres.

They are always looking for new, innovative ways to create efficiencies in mail and use insight to enhance their clients' marketing programmes.

As members of the Strategic Mail Partnership Group, they were privy to the fact that Royal Mail was introducing Mailmark: a new and innovative way to manage mail. They not only saw the planning and budgeting opportunities it offered their clients, they also recognised the value of getting involved in developing software to process the information Mailmark provided. They could see its potential in helping their clients get a better level of measurement from their mailings to help understand and enhance their marketing.

Solution

Early adopters of Mailmark – they were one of the first to produce a Mailmark mailing - BBS seized the opportunity to get involved in the embryonic stages of its development.

It was a punt worth acting on as Mailmark has proved invaluable in enhancing every level of service the mailing house offers their clients. Mailmark ensures BBS offers the best discount as well as giving clients total control of their mailing.

For many of their clients, getting the cheapest postage was enough to persuade them to switch to Mailmark, however in the early days, some were willing to pay more in order not to have the barcode on their letters, fearing it would look too much like bulk direct mail and have a detrimental effect on response. In order to overcome this BBS persuaded a group of clients to benchmark a Mailmark campaign against the same campaign the previous year. With the message and execution remaining the same – the only variable (aside from the year) being Mailmark, BBS were able to test whether the Mailmark barcode impacted response. The test was successful and BBS were able to prove that, not only was the postage cheaper, printing a barcode did not lower response rates.

The simple step of adding a Mailmark barcode when the mailing is produced means that BBS's clients can be confident that they have only paid for what they have mailed and can track where their mail is in the system so they know when it is going out for delivery and

when it is going to land. This level of information allows clients to plan campaigns accurately and flex resource accordingly.

All the information that Royal Mail requires, - who the mailing was carried out for, who produced it, the class, format and unique item reference number - is specified in the first 45 characters of the barcode. BBS can then add bespoke data – e.g. the customer urn or what offers have been sent - into one of 3 remaining data-strings (either 6, 25 or 45 characters depending on the depth of information required). This means the barcode can continue to add value once the mail has been delivered. For example, the Mailmark barcode can be scanned when the customer takes the letter into store or to an event – making it easy to track level of response as well as who is responding or for processing returns.

This post delivery scan lets BBS use their bespoke Mailmark software to produce more granular metrics and insights that enhance their client’s marketing reporting and planning - boosting their client relationship from mailing house to strategic partner.

Where Mailmark has had the greatest impact is in adding value to BBS’ event driven marketing offering. BBS has been particularly proactive in inserting the client’s own data into the bar code. This means that if a customer attends an event and brings their letter/invite, the client can scan the barcode and the data is then captured by BBS allowing them to report response rates extremely quickly. This not only helps clients measure the impact of the mailing almost immediately, it allows them to follow up with responders while the event is fresh in their minds. The speed of this insight is a vast improvement from laboriously manual data capturing a customer’s URN – which could often take weeks. For SME’s who do not have their own data processing capabilities this service is a cost-effective and efficient way of enhancing their marketing programmes.

“Marketing is so dynamic these days the fact that we can turn things around in 24/48 hours and have metrics that show how successful an event was as well as respond with a second mailing very quickly. Before it would take weeks and weeks and more often any kind of follow up communication wouldn’t happen. This allows our clients to be more agile - which gives them the edge in the current marketing world.” Curtis Morgan BBS Ltd

Once response has been measured and acted on, the data can then be further analysed to get a profile of who is responding. This can guide companies to find ‘look-a-like’ prospects, and identify those profiles not responding in order to de-prioritise in the next mailing or try another approach.

An example of this is a garden centre on the South coast who had spent a lot of money in sending a mailing inviting a large footprint of customers in their region to an event. When BBS analysed responders they realised that their core footprint of responders were from a smaller cluster of postcodes. This allowed both BBS and the client to be more focused and efficient the next time they sent a mailing. It also allowed BBS to prove the Direct Mail had been the most effective media out of all the local advertising they had done.

With all returns being sent to BBS, Mailmark also helps BBS clean up clients’ databases after each mailing by removing the ‘gone-aways’. This feature enables them to inform a

client of the effectiveness of any bought lists and if there are an unacceptably high number of returns.

Finally, the added benefit of traceability not only helps clients to feel in control of their mailing once it has left their hands, it helps BBS with accountability by being able to prove a mailing has gone out.

Results

Mailmark gives BBS and their clients a depth of information that they didn't have before, allowing them to:

- Track where their mail is and when it is going out for delivery
- Accurately predict when the mail will land, allowing clients to flex their resource in their contact and marketing teams
- Measure how the mailing has performed
- Assess the quality of their data

It is now the default postage option for all sealed letters and postcards that BBS send. The company hopes to be able to get even more scientific and deeper into the analytics in the future – for example using bar coded vouchers to understand spend.

“Mailmark has helped us keep the cost of direct mail down, making it an affordable media – even for those clients mailing at little as 500 items. It has also given us a competitive edge by being able to measure client’s events even better”. Curtis Morgan BBS Ltd

Source: Curtis Morgan, Sales Director, BBS Ltd.