

West LegalEdcenter gets dramatic results from customized direct mail campaign

Direct mail might just shed its “junk mail” reputation, thanks to new digital printing technology that can customize direct mail campaigns in more ways than one. Variable data printing replaces “Dear occupant” with a personal greeting and adds customized information that recipients respond to, as Marketing Manger Shawn Stavseth experienced in a direct mail campaign for West LegalEdcenter.

West LegalEdcenter catalogs over 8,000 continuing legal education (CLE) programs for attorneys nationwide who comply with state CLE requirements for their area of practice. The company offers the programs online, saving attorneys the time away from work and travel expenses.

Stavseth’s department faced the daunting task of marketing West LegalEdcenter CLE programs to individual attorneys nationwide who practice in vastly different areas of law, in states that have different sets of compliance requirements. West LegalEdcenter focused on a strategy of reminding attorneys that their compliance requirements were coming due and relied on generic email blasts and postcards sent monthly to different groups of attorneys based on their compliance deadlines. Response was limited, causing revenues to remain flat while printing and mailing costs continued to rise.

When West LegalEdcenter printing partner, Daily Printing in Plymouth, began offering variable data printing a year ago, the postcard mailing suddenly became a key component of Stavseth’s marketing plan. Her department

THE PROBLEM

WEST LEGALEDCENTER, a Thomson West business, utilizes direct mail marketing to inform attorneys nationwide about its continuing legal education (CLE) programs for state compliance requirements. The attorneys practice in vastly different areas of law, and range from solo practitioners to partners in global law firms. To complicate matters, each state has a different set of CLE requirements and compliance deadlines. West LegalEdcenter relied on generic postcards to remind attorneys when their compliance deadlines were coming due.

THE SOLUTION

When Daily Printing began offering variable data printing a year ago, West LegalEdcenter was able to customize its postcard campaign with personalized greetings and variable information that better informed the individual recipients. West LegalEdcenter has seen a 30 percent jump in response to its postcard campaign and increased revenue, despite decreasing the size of its target audience.

changed its marketing focus from a compliance-based strategy to a professional development strategy using variable data printing to customize the message.

The department also downsized its target audience to focus only on solo and small-firm attorneys and further penetrated that base. A separate strategy was implemented for large-firm attorneys by

targeting their professional development departments with a different mailing.

“The whole relevance of the postcard mailing dramatically increased. It’s pretty cool technology. I’m seeing more and more of it in my own mailbox. It makes the piece more relevant to me, and as a marketer, I notice those things,” says Stavseth.

West LegalEdcenter needed to customize its direct mail with 13 pieces of variable information from its database, advertising different CLE programs to attorneys based on their area of practice and state requirements. Some postcards also included testimonies.

The result has been exceptional, says Stavseth, and has reinforced her belief that direct mail still works. Even while downsizing its direct mail quantity to reach a more targeted audience, West LegalEdcenter has experienced a 30 percent increase in the response rate over the generic postcards. Furthermore, after the initial expense of setting up the system of coding rules for the variable components, Stavseth says expenses have stabilized, revenue has increased and the postcard campaign is now “smooth sailing.”

“The market right now is so inundated with information, between blogs, podcasts and text messaging. Mindshare is difficult to get. But traditional mail is still working if you have that relevant component,” she says.

A project of West LegalEdcenter’s size and scope validates what Daily Printing has been telling its customers about the power of variable printing, says Tom Moe,



Shawn Stavseth and Tom Moe

Vice President of Sales & Marketing.

"It's not about saving money at the marketing level; it's about increasing revenue. What variable printing will do is lower the cost per response," he says. "VDP offers our customers the opportunity to increase return on investment for their marketing dollars."

Moe adds that in today's market, personalization is the minimum you should be doing to even get your target audience to look at your mail; customization is required to get them to respond. With variable data printing, the digital quality of the images and color are not sacrificed, and short print runs are more available, which helps customers keep collateral inventories under control and reduce costs in the long run.

Daily Printing uses the Xerox iGen digital press. Stavseth says she can get a fast turnaround from Daily Printing and added attention to her projects.

"With Daily Printing, I feel like my projects have priority. We work so well together and I have a great relationship with them. They've worked with us so long, they know where I'm coming from and where I'm going," says Stavseth.

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— SHAWN STAVSETH,
Marketing Manager at West LegalEdcenter

Moe says customer relationships are a high priority at Daily Printing, a 110 employee-owned operation that has been a part of the Twin Cities since 1950. Over the years it has continued to add the services that the market demands and variable data printing is already moving into the next phase. Moe says customers will want to start incorporating print campaigns with other forms of media, such as Web campaigns.

Stavseth says she already feels a little behind on the latest technology.

"You've got to keep up with the market, especially in the printing industry," she says, "and Daily Printing has been able to do that."

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