

Management Resources

Market Research for You and Your Customers

by Joanne Vinyard, Director, The Print Council

It is impossible to pick up a newspaper or magazine, or scan a Web article without reading about the changing media landscape. Marketing professionals—your customers—are cautious about their ad budgets, investigating all media options, and demanding a return on their investments or proof their expenditures will produce a response, customer engagement or, better yet, initiate a purchase.

In a recent CMO Council survey, marketing professionals were asked to identify their top challenges. The top three are:

- Quantifying and measuring the value of marketing programs and investments (53%).
- Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their marketing.
- Growing customer knowledge, insight, and conversations.

This push by marketers to improve and track their media use is redrawing the print landscape in a way that print providers need to express clearly the value proposition of print. Jim Mikol, vice president, Leo Burnett, at a recent conference echoed these survey findings and stated that printers need to express that print:

- Creates communities of consumers
- Delivers rich content
- Interacts with, connects, and amplifies all types of media.

To communicate this value, print providers and our industry will need to cite credible research and data in order to persuade marketing professionals and customers that print does fit well in the media mix and can successfully move customers to react, engage, and respond.

Credible Research From Multiple Sources

The Print Council, RIT, and six U.S. universities have collaborated on *Print in the Mix* (PIM), a clearinghouse of print media research that puts forth convincing and verifiable research on the effectiveness and value of print. The website was funded and created because The Print Council realized printers needed marketing and research tools when promoting their services and demonstrating the value of print to their customers. (www.printinthemix.rit.edu)

PIM Research at Work

Since the establishment of PIM in August 2007, companies have been using the PIM research to position their companies. They have educated their sales and marketing staff, their customers, and incorporated the research into their collateral pieces. Here are examples from six companies that have used the research in a variety of ways.

Jet Inc., founded in 1947, is a large, privately held sheetfed commercial printer and employs 200 people within its hub facility in Downers Grove, IL and its warehousing and fulfillment facility in Bolingbrook, IL. The company offers pre-press and planning, conventional/specialty printing, and plastic card manufacturing as well as full-service fulfillment, distribution, and warehousing services.

Jeff Norby, Jet President and Printing Industries of Illinois/Indiana board member, stated Jet uses the team sales approach—including a marketing director, sales manager, and two business development/product managers. This team meets with the sales rep to discuss the client, the opportunity, and the research to develop the

specific sales approach. Research comes from associations, D&B, Hoovers, and Print in the Mix, and shapes their company media/marketing materials, presentations, and sharpens their focus on specific customer issues.

The Print in the Mix research “provides fact-based information we use to develop and support our approach with the client. Links to PIM have been placed on our website. Because the information is fact-based, our reps are able to talk specifics during the sales process. This has been very helpful in addressing client concerns about the value of the print option and ROI.”

The Daniels Group, a North Carolina company founded in 1948, began as a secretarial service, moved into traditional telephone answering service, and in 1969, purchased Miller Printing Company. Today, Daniels has three companies: *Daniels Graphics* (commercial printing, design, marketing consulting, digital production); *Daniels Communications* (a full-service call management firm); and *edu.Marc* with marketing and fundraising services exclusively for nonprofit organizations.

John Holladay, Director of Business Development, states the Daniels Group constantly updates and revamps its corporate presentations to include outside research and their own observations about their local market. It develops case studies related to the effective use of print, and uses third-party research to validate their arguments for print.

“Print in the Mix has improved the content of our customer newsletter.” One article based on PIM research was written on the tactics that increase the open-rates of envelopes. This popular article resulted in

56% of the readers downloading the PIM research (double the open rate of the next most popular article).

“Research helps create a more educated client. It makes our job easier when a client knows exactly what he/she wants and how they want it. Some customers are pretty analytical. We use data to recognize the customers’ love of information—and being the source that delivers it.”

Lake County Press (LCP) is a \$50-million independently owned and operated company in Waukegan, IL serving the graphic design community, advertising agencies, and Fortune 500 corporations. Debbie Schulz, a solutions consultant for digital services, supports the sales force on digital, one-to-one, and on-demand initiatives, digesting information into one-page summaries she disseminates to sales.

PIM research is being used at LCP in several different ways. A digital booklet targeting designers using PIM research is being produced. Links to the PIM website have been emailed to the sales force. Moreover, when the opportunity arises, the research links have been sent to customers as a resource for print information.

IWCO Direct, established thirty-five years ago with facilities in New York and Minnesota, provides all direct-mail production services—print, envelope, plastic, mailing, fulfillment, and data services—in an integrated “total package” supply chain solution.

According to Debora Haskel, vice president of marketing, IWCO sales reps rely on marketing to collect research, such as white papers, primary research conducted by IWCO, and PIM reports. Marketing provides industry information to sales on a weekly and sometimes daily basis.

Haskel says, “PIM research supports our effort to build what we refer to as RSVP—relevant sales and value proposition. It helps justify using print, particularly for high-volume acquisition direct mail. Facts and figures—rather than opinion and anecdotal information—helps solidify

IWCO Direct as subject matter experts and a trusted source of industry information. We also use the research at community events to help educate the community at large about the value of print and job opportunities in both print and supporting disciplines (accounting, human resources, customer service, etc.).”

Lawton Printing is an independently owned Spokane, WA company, led by Laura Lawton-Forsyth, president, and one of the family’s fourth-generation employed by the corporation. Lawton has diversified into four divisions: Commercial Printing, File-Ez Folder, Inc., Lawton Publications, and The Index Tab Division.

Ray Lawton, chairman of the board and former chairman of the PIA board of directors, says, “Using PIM information is a culture change for Lawton reps. It has to be constantly ‘fed’ to them so they understand the depth of information available to be integrated into their sales presentations.”

Lawton sees PIM as a “tool management needs to reinforce the sales team on a day-to-day basis. We can significantly differentiate our reps from others. We want to be acknowledged as a leader in understanding how print can really work for a customer and how it interacts with other media and get a customer to make a decision about purchasing a product.”

For those who know Scott Tilden, former PIA chief technology officer and now with direct mail printer and integrated marketing company **Direct Group** in Pennington, NJ, they know he searches for, examines, and absorbs a large amount of research and information in his daily routine and finds the material in trade pubs, business press, PIM, and associations.

Tilden says, “Customers always want credible research on what their competitors are up to. The key word here is ‘credible.’ Glowing research about how great a hammer is for every kind of repair loses luster when the report comes from, say, Stanley. Research needs to pass the ‘sniff test.’ Groundbreaking research will footnote and

reference liberally; establish its independence or defensibility; include study and release dates; and let people know where they can find or see the research themselves.”

He also points out “you could be selling an A-1 solution, but some customers may not know that they have a problem. Research helps them know that the pain they’re suffering isn’t unique in the industry; demonstrates trends or conditions; and easily yields to the solution you have for them today.”

Conclusion

Research found in *Print in the Mix* is indeed necessary to reinforce the fact that print has a valuable and effective place in the marketing media mix. The research will help persuade marketing professionals of its needed investment and successful outcome. These resources are available to all PIA/GATF members. It is the hope of The Print Council print providers will incorporate the data and information into their marketing plans and make the expert case for print media with their customers.

Joanne Vinyard will attend the S&ME Conference to discuss Print in the Mix and resources available through The Print Council. Visit www.theprintcouncil.org and www.printinbemix.rit.edu or email jvinyard@msn.com.

S&ME Conference

Consumer Trends and the Impact on Media Mix Decisions

In this seminar, on June 22, Cheryl Kahanec of Sandy Alexander will explore:

- Media mix decisions—what they are, how they’re made, and how to measure the different media...even when there might not be measurement tools.
- How to assess clients and their marketing goals and how to measure the value of their campaigns.
- Media campaigns that tie print, Web, email, and other communication tools together.

For conference info, visit www.gain.net.