

Why You Should Not Eliminate Your Print Brochure

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LERN has been getting many inquiries from members whose administrations want to eliminate or reduce or change their print brochure in some way. You can tell your central administration that for more than 25 years, LERN has been monitoring continuing and community education brochure results, and recently conducted the surveys to be mentioned in this article.

Even for online programs, even when people register online, even in the age of eMarketing, direct mail still accounts for the majority of registrations and income for continuing and community education programs – and particularly for community and recreation programs. When we survey LERN member programs, we continually find that although online registration is growing steadily, enrollments generated from print promotions still account for as much as 70% of registrations and sometimes more. In fact, we have heard from several member programs that eliminated their print brochures for one term and subsequently saw a 30 to 40 percent drop in enrollment – and that type of drop is not unusual. Another program told us they would not be printing and distributing a fall brochure. We followed up, and the program told us:

"This is the worst fall semester Adult Learning Services has had since I have worked here (since 1992). We definitely feel that not mailing the catalog had a significant effect on registration."

More programs have given us similar feedback:

"This has been an excruciating setback for us. At a time we were asked to become self-supporting, they took away the best marketing piece we had."

"A city near us has a mayor that cut their brochure, and of course, their enrollments have dropped in a huge way. It has happened in a couple of cities in our area already with dismal results."

LERN Conference presenter and direct mail expert Paul Franklin reported a recent study by the U.S. Postal Service that shows that print catalogs are the biggest influence in generating online customer orders. Customers who receive print brochures are:

- More likely to become multi-buyers on-line
- Accountable for 15% more transactions than those who did not get a catalog
- Shown to spend an average of 16% more than customers who did not get a catalog.

Additional research from the USPS shows that:

- Customers spend 30 minutes per day sorting, viewing and acting on mail.
- 98% of households bring in their mail daily.
- 77% sort through their mail daily.

The main problem with not having a print brochure is that you are expecting people to come to you to obtain information about your program. You are not putting it in their hands (as you do with a mailed print course/class schedule) which means that you are expecting them to remember, seek, and act on interest in your program. It's a busy world and that's a lot to expect. Here are some key things to remember:

1. Print brochures drive enrollment. Most LERN members report that 70-75% of their enrollments come from their brochures. One LERN member shared that 80% of his program's enrollment is directly attributed to the brochure.

2. Print brochures are “push” oriented. They arrive in the hands of the reader. The reader does not have to go to them. Even in the age of increased “pull” marketing, “push” strategies are still crucial.

3. Print brochures are often easier to read and navigate than digital promotions.

4. Print brochures can be kept, shared, and re-read.

5. Print brochures are accessible to ALL household members.

One LERN member from Henderson, Nevada surveyed participants and learned that:

- **80%** of residents said they learn about the programs through the print brochure.
- **75%** of the respondents said they keep the brochure until the next issue arrives.
- **60%** indicated that at least two people read the brochure



6. Programs that do eliminate the print brochure see significant declines in enrollment. Recently, a LERN member reported that a previous dean had mandated the elimination of the print brochure. Enrollments dropped dramatically and had dwindled to about 200 per term when a new dean was hired and reinstated it. Registrations rebounded to 4,000 per term. Declining enrollments are the norm when print promotion is eliminated.

Even though many people may now register online, the registration form in your print brochure is a marketing tool that pays for itself over and over. It tells the reader to take action and register. For proof, just look at the next catalog arriving in your mail - it will have an order form. Provide all the information needed to convince someone to register, including place, time, cost, and instructor. The print brochure should contain everything someone needs to know to make a decision to attend your programs.

The lesson to be learned here is that decisions should not be made without data. Every organization should survey for data, and use the data to make decisions. Use



the survey data to justify and support your program's value to your central administrators. Being able to track and measure the effectiveness of direct mail is a critically important benefit. Tracking responses, refining your distribution, and targeting more carefully can significantly increase your enrollments and income. Intelligent mailing strategies are important. It is not sufficient just to mail your brochures to the community at large. Mail the brochure to existing customers and mail more often to your best customers. This increases enrollments.



LERN recommends using targeted marketing to make mailings more efficient and effective, and to test the response to alternatives to print promotions. LERN's Market Segmenting software analysis tool was developed to help you understand who your best customers are and how to target them most effectively. The analysis is available free to LERN members, and includes reports on carrier routes, repeat rate, primary market segments, and much more. For more details on this service, contact Debbie at Debbie@lern.org.

There are also many ways to cut brochure costs without eliminating your brochures completely. If you are interested in more information on this, please contact us at info@lern.org.



Use Direct Mail as part of an Integrated Marketing Strategy.

Electronic communication can be wiped out with a tap of the "delete" key, and it requires initiative on the part of participants to go to your web site or reply to an email for additional details. Again, you need to put something in their hands on a regular basis.

Use your brochure to drive people to the web site where you can give them a lot more information about your program and activities, and by all means have an online registration option. Online registration has become essential.

eMarketing is certainly an important component of your overall marketing mix, but it is not time to abandon the print brochure. Other marketing delivery options have come into play rapidly (social networking, mobile, etc.), but people are not ready for a drastic change like the elimination of print brochures. You should never make a drastic change in your marketing plan without testing it first.

Many people like to register online because of the convenience it represents, but they do not necessarily want to read descriptions online. We recommend providing brief and interesting course descriptions in a brochure that you mail twice to your best customers, and supplementing those mailings with email and mobile reminders about registration online, and if possible with social networking posts. If your course descriptions are well written, they will motivate readers to seek additional details on your program, which they can do on your web site. Provide a copy/link to a PDF or digital version of your current brochure on the main page of the web site for your program to reflect a coordination of efforts.

Your web site is the perfect place to offer additional details because you are not limited to space and the cost of that space. The best approach right now is to use your brochure and web site in direct support of each other. Provide a link on your web site where site visitors can request a copy of your brochure. Send emails to drive people to your web site. Take advantage of all the benefits that each medium has to offer for your marketing efforts, and cross-promote.





QR Codes Drive Response

QR Codes can turn a print advertising campaign into a direct marketing tool with a higher response rate than direct mail alone. One reason is that mobile codes can enhance the reading experience for a targeted audience. Codes used to promote a discount, coupon or sweepstakes have a higher response rate.

According to a new report from Nellymoser Inc., “Scan Response Rates in National Magazines,” found that readers of national magazines scan QR codes, Microsoft Tags, digital watermarks and other mobile action codes at an average rate of 6.4 percent. The report also found that mobile users are actively engaged and view an average of 18.9 mobile pages.

“The big news is that QR-style mobile codes in magazines get higher response rates than other printed direct marketing tools,” said Roger Matus, executive vice president at Nellymoser Inc., Arlington, MA.

“We never knew this before because this is the first time anyone has been able to measure the complete impact of printed mobile codes from the initial scan to the delivery of the mobile experience,” he said. Read the full article at: <http://www.mobilemarketer.com/cms/news/research/13905.html>

Here are some additional facts and talking points you can use to persuade your administration to keep the print brochure:

Direct mail is a proven advertising tool.

- Direct mail has long been a strong component in the advertising programs of successful large businesses and Fortune 500 companies to promote their products and drive sales.
- Direct Marketing Association research finds every \$1 spent on direct mail generates an impressive \$12.57 in sales.
- Direct mail has strengths other advertising media can't claim — it's personal, tangible, portable (to re-read later and share with others), manageable, and measurable.
- Three out of four people say they open and read direct mail. Direct mail delivers results
- Direct mail has influenced more consumers' buying decisions than any other advertising medium — 76% of consumer purchases have been the result of a direct mail piece.
- Direct mail gets directly into the homes and hands of consumers, so mail has a powerful impact that's unbeatable.
- Direct mail cuts through the clutter and connects with age groups with disposable income.



LERN strongly recommends that you reinstate your print brochure if you have eliminated it. Before you make any drastic changes to your marketing plan, TEST, TEST, TEST! To be cautious, we recommend a limited print-run as a test. Print a brochure and mail it to a sample of your existing customer base. Compare the response rate with those of customers who did not receive a print brochure. This will limit your risk and give you data you can use to support expanding the mailing.

Your brochure is not a cost. It is an investment, and if you reinstate it you should expect to see enrollments increase and income increase in amounts greater than the expense of the catalog. And, of course, do not eliminate your brochure if you are being asked to consider doing so.

Catalogs drive sales for all household income groups.

Nearly 60% of online shoppers enjoy receiving catalogs. 57% of online shoppers said even though they buy online, they would still like to have a catalog on hand.

Catalogs are business builders.

Catalogs were found to discourage comparison shopping by more than 10%.

When shoppers receive catalogs, they spend more!

Revenue is more than two times greater from sending catalogs compared to sending only online communication. Average purchase is \$88 with a catalog vs. \$69 without a catalog.