

# The power of direct mail

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It is fair to say that direct mail is a discipline with a bad reputation. Thanks to the 90s and its sweepstakes junk mail and windscreen flyer drops, coupled with the digital age's spam email and m-spam, many marketers overlook the tool before considering the benefits.

Today, marketers stick with the tried and tested traditional above-the-line media and with the ever-increasing focus on digital and social media, attribute a large portion of the budget to online marketing. In this instance, direct marketing might consist of little more than a personalised HTML email which attempts to create the feeling of speaking directly to the customer. A fundamental flaw with this is that you know little about the customer that is being targeted.

Sam Hewitson, [Boomtown](#) Business Unit Manager, comments saying: "Direct is shifting from response to engagement and can enhance traditional brand-building campaigns.

"When you have a niche audience and are able to uncover unique insights about the person you are selling to, a well-crafted direct marketing piece can yield excellent results. It is also a highly measurable and easier to track return on investment, which is so important today."

A great example of this, is the [Aggreko](#) 'Always On' campaign. Aggreko, a global leader in temporary power supply, needed to raise awareness of its solutions within the mining and manufacturing sectors in South Africa. The creative team at Boomtown were charged with the task to raise awareness of the brand and turn contacts into sales. The agency provided a complete solution, starting with researching the top 500 mining and manufacturing companies in South Africa. From there, its in-house tele-research unit drilled down to identify the specific person Aggreko needed to be speaking to.

Once the data was verified, recipients received a black box containing a device with a simple switch indicating off and on. When the user flicked the switch to turn it off, an orange hand popped out and flicked the switch back on. Boomtown Creative Director Andrew MacKenzie adds: "The message behind the piece was to make sure your mine or plant is always on. This simple message was conveyed in a memorable and fun way which not only created talk-ability, thereby increasing brand affinity, but the campaign also yielded an almost unheard-of positive response rate of 56%." The three-dimensional direct marketing piece was the focal point, but it was strongly supported by traditional media, all driving potential customers to a central phone number and dedicated campaign website which allowed the campaign's success to be tracked.

Another recent example of a creative award-winning direct marketing piece is '[The World's First Stethoscope Radio Ad](#)', created for non-profit organisation, [African Healthcare Placements](#) (AHP). AHP wanted to draw enthusiastic graduate doctors from the US and Europe to work in Africa and improve medical care and gain invaluable experience across Africa.

To stand out from the crowd and draw attention to the needs of the continent, Doctors place their stethoscope on the box, where a pressure sensor activates an audio clip. MacKenzie adds: "We knew all graduating doctors have a stethoscope, so we devised an idea which also encouraged sharing amongst their peers."

From 50 boxes sent, handfuls of doctors have been placed, and statistics show that each doctor will touch 80,000 lives over the course of their career.

This campaign won Boomtown a Clio Healthcare Award and most recently, a Cannes Lion.

These two highly effective, creative and award-winning campaigns arguably yielded far better results than any 'traditional' media could have. So the next time you are considering your communications strategy, if you have a limited budget to work

with but a specific message and insight, don't dismiss direct marketing.

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