

# What Direct Marketing Needs Now: A New Shot of Creativity

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*Updating Five Principles From David Ogilvy to Help Connect With Consumers*

by Mat Zucker

Published: October 19, 2009

As The DMA dissects the state of direct marketing in San Diego, we have a solution behind which the industry can rally right now: re-inject creativity.

Creativity is both ideas and innovation -- creative ideas which will persuade and modern experiences through which customer relationships will thrive. It comes from looking at challenges differently, imagining not what is, but what can be. Creativity will free the work (and remember, it's about the work) from the "prison of the proven" in which too much direct is currently stuck. Creativity will help our brands get on our customer's short list, motivate action, and earn a deeper and longer-lasting relationship. Creativity also will return us to an industry with guts, and frankly, that will help us attract the young and smart. Don't we want that? Don't we need that?

This is no small feat. This takes rethinking how direct marketing should work. Reasserting creativity's role in it. Reinvigorating the people who drive it. And reinterpreting it all for the digital age. It's nothing less than a redirection of direct. For us, it's time for "re-direct" -- an industry-wide movement with some updated principles to adopt from David Ogilvy:

## 1. You cannot bore people into buying your product

Five percent off? Free shipping and handling? We're driving our customers numb with many of the same messages and offers -- all at once, delivered in the same manner. It must be as boring to get the work as it is to make it. We need to break through with differentiating ideas, real product news, shareable experiences and useful content. We need to give them a brain buzz. Creative should partner with analytics to find new opportunities and engage people's right brain.

## 2. Target passions, not just demographics

People operate in networks of family, friends and strangers with like-minded interests. We're not marketing to an 18-to-34-year-old woman, but talking with someone who loves, lives and breathes soccer, cooking, kids, antiques, "30 Rock" and her mobile phone. She speaks up, speaks out and shares across channels online and offline, across geographies and age brackets. The strategies we brief in should reflect these passions and behaviors, so the media and the creative can actually work in these new networks.

## 3. The 'big yes' is built on little yeses

We sell. Or Else. And the digital age offers us new ways to be great and trusted salespeople for our brands. Selling is noble. We don't always need to rush nor be one-trick ponies. Friends don't grab friends' wallets. We want them to come back for more. And sometimes the best way to sell is to be indi-

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rect -- earning response through usefulness or referral.

4. Our work should flow from the brand, not fight it

Direct has been operating in a silo, with creative focused only on the short-term rather than what reinforces the brand for the long haul. Customers, though, now see everything a brand does, and they rally behind the brands they love. This is an opportunity to build on that love and strengthen it -- not undermine it with work that's disharmonious because of short-sighted objectives.

5. Encourage innovation. Change is our lifeblood, stagnation our death knell

David Ogilvy demanded it. While most of us seem to repeat and optimize what works, our customers wake up fresh and try new things every day. Our curiosity and restlessness as direct marketers is our birthright to unleash more trial of what's new. We can connect traditional to digital channels. We can rethink CRM programs as editors serving an audience. We can rethink offers as experiences. Instead of yet another keychain or e-newsletter, what about a custom app or webinar to learn something new? Most of all, we need to get off our duff and onto their mobile phones.

David Ogilvy believed so strongly in the power of direct, he once suggested that every general advertising professional first be an apprentice in direct marketing for some time to actually learn how to sell. For him, direct was his "first love and later, his secret weapon." In a video to our staff he also once said, "Ladies and Gentleman, I envy you. Your timing is perfect. You've come into the direct response business at the right moment in history. You're onto a good thing."

This is a great time to be in the direct-marketing business. How shall we spend it?

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