

FUNDRAISING & PHILANTHROPY AUSTRALASIA

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The Technology Issue

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New technology pushes out DM boundaries

Recent developments in technology are providing direct marketers with new and exciting creative possibilities, writes **Malcolm Auld**.

In the quest to communicate with customers (commercial sector) and supporters (not-for-profit sector) in more personalised ways, marketers are frothing at the mouth at the possibilities presented by recent developments in technology.

There is currently a renaissance going on in the direct mail world, driven mostly by technology-related factors, and the results being achieved are often much better than those of historical campaigns.

This re-birth began in Australia about 12 months ago, and the catalysts for the resurgent interest in direct mail are:

1. New direct marketing (DM) design software
2. Digital colour printing
3. Changes to privacy laws
4. New Australia Post services
5. Power of personalised messages to build brands

Software such as XMPie, DreamType and Direct Smile are radically altering the creative possibilities for direct mail, particularly how it integrates with websites and other print and electronic media. And high quality, variable-data digital colour printers have made short-run personalised printing cost effective.

The changes in privacy laws in recent years have meant that data held by marketers is now of a much higher quality, enabling better targeting and personalisation. Australia Post has also introduced a number of new services such as Impact Mail, to encourage more creative mail solutions.

The impact of all this activity is the dawning of a new creative era in which print media can now be personalised –

using data, graphics, colour and other variables. As every marketer knows, the personal media are the most powerful for building brands, so the more you can “individualize” your communications to targeted recipients, the better your results.

And given the most important thing in the world to most people is *themselves* – the more you can flatter people with relevant communications reflecting creative use of specific data about them, the better your results and the stronger your branding.

Creative personalisation gets results

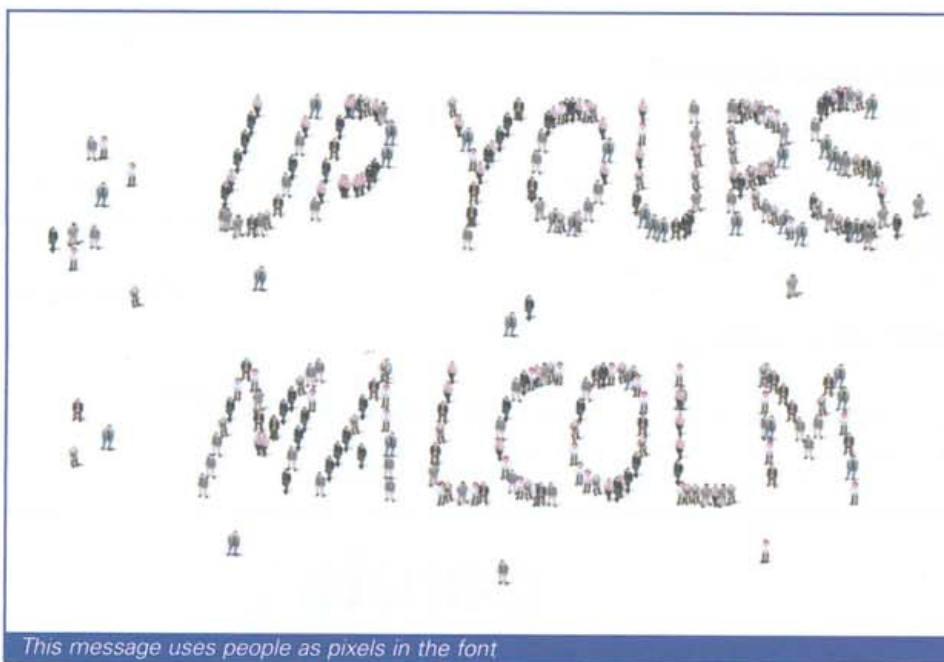
The DreamType and Direct Smile software solutions offer a completely new dimension in personalised print creativity.

You can manufacture your own fonts, or

select from an existing font library. Create pixels using any image you like – for example, flowers, birds, shells, people, or almost anything you can imagine. Then print the fonts on any background you want.

The postcard below was created to promote seminars about *The Direct Mail Renaissance*. It was the first campaign in Australia to use Direct Smile fonts combined with XMPie website personalisation. The font is made of people, and the message included a personalised website link for each postcard recipient, where they could download a PDF of the seminar brochure.

Apart from the creative opportunities, the real power of this technology is the results. Hundreds of people linked to their



This message uses people as pixels in the font



mailing to 27,000 customers generated a 5% response to the promotion. The test cell of 3,000 units yielded a response rate of almost 23% – that's almost 450% better than the control pack.

It's not just an individual's name that can be personalised. The postcard (at left) made the featured shoe literally run out of the shop – it became the largest selling shoe in Sears within a week. It wasn't just the \$5.00 off that did the trick, but rather the personalised map of the shortest route from the customer's home to their nearest Sears store – and how many steps it takes to get there – that generated the response.

Testing is the key to success

As always with direct marketing, testing is the key to success with these new technologies. With digital colour printing you can print one or one million units, so you can test as many mailings as you like until you make a decision on how best to use the technology.

This is good news for not-for-profit marketers and fundraisers, as many not-for-profits have good quality databases and can isolate test cells easily. And while small-

cess to just response rates – track the impact on your brand. Of all your marketing activity, it's the personalised media – mail, telephone, e-mail, sms and sales people – that have the most impact on your brand value.

Traps for young players

Just because digital press is a different way to print, doesn't mean it is easier. What you produce is only as good as the quality of the data you employ, so you must have accurate and current data.

Also, some colours like metallics don't reproduce all that well using digital technology, so take the time to view samples and run tests. Not all print companies or mail houses understand digital technology – and certainly not many print brokers do. Be sure you are not a guinea pig, or if you are, build in time to get the final output delivered to your satisfaction.

The printed word is here for the long haul. People prefer to read from paper rather than from a screen because it's easier – you don't have to wait for downloads or scroll up and down to see the whole picture.

And if your printed words are the words your supporters love to hear – their name – and they are produced in a creative way

personal website within a few hours of receiving the "Up Yours" postcard – and the first booking came in under four hours of the first mail being delivered.

In Europe, where this technology was invented, they're getting response rates up to 30% for business communications and 17% for consumer mailings. And you can use it to creatively personalise calendars, mouse mats, invitations – almost anything that can be printed.

Integrate personalised mail and web communications

XMPie is a complete desktop workflow tool that allows you to prepare and manage a personal communications campaign from your desktop. You can prepare data sets, upload and manipulate data, import text, graphics and images, and send them directly to a printer and website for production.

Identical personalised messages – image and text – can then appear on a postcard, mail pack, poster, banners, stickers or other print media, as well as on a website, HTML newsletter and even SMS. In fact, the recipient of a mailing can link via a personalised URL directly to a unique website that features the same content from the mailing.

A test by Repco using DreamType font to personalise a postcard that linked to a personalised website yielded surprising results. The traditional non-personalised

"...the most important thing in the world to most people is themselves – the more you can flatter people with relevant communications reflecting creative use of specific data about them, the better your results..."

run digital colour costs marginally more than traditional offset printing, it's the results you measure. If the new technology generates higher response rates than traditional mailings, and the maths adds up with regard to costs, roll-out using the new technology.

When measuring the effectiveness of campaigns don't limit your criteria for suc-

with related imagery and data, your responses will increase and your brand value will grow.

A copy of *The Direct Mail Renaissance* white paper can be downloaded from www.malcolmaulddirect.com



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