

Labels for response back campaigns

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We live in the era of public participation in advertising and commercial public relations. The use of respondent peel-off labels makes it possible to adapt this strategy to low budget, local political campaigns as well.

TV commercials urge the public to call special 800 or 900 numbers and register their opinions, or order products. Newer technologies now being developed for cable TV networks will make it even easier for audiences to respond. The immediacy and the personal participation these programs offer makes them very attractive communications and marketing techniques.

Of course, response mechanisms such as business reply cards have been a part of non-political, commercial direct mail for years. When you offer a product or service for sale, the cost of response mechanisms can be reflected in the selling price. Clearly, this cost—up to 45 cents per unit for return postage—is usually not possible in a political campaign activity other than fundraising. However, there are some new twists that can be applied easily to many other campaign situations.

Inviting the views of voters and making it easy for them to communicate with the campaign is clearly a valuable strategy for political candidates. They can position themselves as open, available and interested in their constituents' views in a general way. But without a clear and dynamic response mechanism, this tactic loses much of its punch.

Now, however, campaigns have begun to design direct mail programs that involve recipients and invite their response. Mailers are designed to be torn in two, with one half to be filled out and returned by the respondent.

The piece is mailed to the recipients, using a peel-off label which is cut apart and affixed with its backing still attached, using the normal Cheshire machine process. The recipient then peels off the label, affixes it to the response portion of the mailer, adds a stamp and returns it. This is very similar to the technique the I.R.S. uses to mail out tax forms and get back returns that exactly match the information in their data base.

The advantages are twofold:

- By receiving responses with the original mailing label, campaigns can develop an I.D. program on issues of interest. Labels can include the voter's I.D. or affidavit number so that when information is received back, particular responses can be coded for further follow up by the campaign.
- By using peel-off labels with their backing, the cost of the program is far less than what it would cost with either a postage paid business reply envelop—or a laser-produced mailer. This is of particular interest to local campaigns with limited budgets.

This technique can be used to gather endorsements, to identify subjects of concern to specific voters and to get voter opinions. For voters already identified as supporters, this response mechanism could be used to recruit volunteers, identify locations for signs or find out who needs an absentee ballot or a ride to the polls on election day.

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