

# aps UPDATE

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## DIRECT TO DOOR DELIVERY DOESN'T JUST COST LESS, IT'S SIMPLY BETTER

Whether you have distributed direct to the door as a member of the direct to door (alternate) delivery industry for a long or even a short time, you've probably always heard that delivery to the mailbox by the USPS is more timely and trustworthy than direct to door (D2D) and thus, worth the extra expense.

The question is, what is the source and how long has that theory been severely flawed? D2D has grown to new heights over the most recent 20 years while the USPS continues to hemorrhage money and longs to cut days of delivery, locations and people. So much for more timely and trustworthy.

The answer to the question of source is the cannon blasts of advertising from the USPS which can be cited for helping attach a warm and fuzzy feeling to the Norman Rockwell type scene of a postal carrier in Bermuda shorts making his rounds while stopping to chat with citizens along their route. The reality is, direct mail is becoming more expensive to prepare and deliver, diminishing volume only adds to the cost and maybe if carriers could stop to chat less they wouldn't actually need as many people.

The notion that D2D is not as timely or trustworthy has long ago been laid to waste. Whether it's a solo doorhanger hung on the door, or a bag of advertising inserts placed on the drive saturated into geographical areas, delivery can be assured and response rates easily measured.

To say that D2D is less expensive for a reason is actually true. But it's

not the reasons our competition would want others to think. Our model for getting delivery to the home, while laborious and certainly not inexpensive, does not come with the same overhead attached as that of the USPS. Coupled with GPS systems that aid in the tracking and verification of delivery, D2D can no longer be at



the mercy of unscrupulous claims from competitors.

### SIMPLY PUT, D2D IS BETTER THAN MAIL...

When done right, D2D is every bit the science that a direct mail campaign is. There are certainly similarities. But the comparison ends at the door. Response rates have more opportunity to grow when the piece delivered has the stage all to themselves.

Here are several ways to make sure a client's delivery gets its best return on investment:

First, it's not really the medium but the message. Statistics from the Direct Marketing Association show that 79% of people that receive a doorhanger either keep it, pass it on, and/or read or glance at

it at the door. So in other words, the goal for the message is to get it read. Give them a good message with a compelling reason to respond. Doorhangers are only the messenger!

Your response depends on a number of things:

- 1) The affluence of the area you're targeting (household income)
- 2) The age of the people you're targeting
- 3) How well the promotional piece is designed and written
- 4) The terms and conditions (savings) the piece offers
- 5) How far geographically from your business are you willing to service your audience
- 6) Do you want to include all building types in an area or eliminate say, apartments focusing only on residential units
- 7) The local economy in general

According to Marketingprofs.com, the range of response to doorhangers can vary from 1/2% up to as much as 25% depending on your industry, message and offer. For instance, Pizza is at the high end while professional services, such as house cleaning, irrigation specialist, alarm system company, etc. are closer to the lower end. In other words, the higher fee you charge or the more exclusive your potential clientele, the lower the response. Creating long term customers are usually the goal of any advertising

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and especially professional service providers. It should be noted that doorhangers as a marketing vehicle are recommended by most national franchisers of maid services and AAPS receives numerous inquiries each year from new franchisees around the country.

For national direct marketers and advertisers, D2D has grown exponentially in the alternative-media marketing discipline as an approach that is cost-efficient, trackable and effective. Companies such as AT&T, Verizon, Time Warner, Allstate Insurance and a host of Packaged Goods companies use the method quite often to gain customer acquisition, increase store traffic and generate product trial.

It used to be only larger, national companies could afford to generate geo-demographic targeting but now, there are many direct to door companies that can provide targeting maps for anyone, anywhere in one single market or regional area. Many single markets have companies that are customized for their areas and can provide detailed demographic mapping for local or national clients.

Job One for D2D companies has never changed for over 40 years. Making sure that they target the right areas and that doorhangers and saturation bags get to the door or drive. GPS tracking is quickly becoming the standard by which D2D companies are operating. Clients can conveniently observe an ongoing live delivery from the comfort of their own PC. It is replacing some of the need to go out and observe delivery on the door but human observation certainly remains a critical component of the delivery and supervisors in the field help maximize the effort of each carrier while GPS covers the nooks and crannies.

Let's face it, nothing is perfect. According to a direct mailer that converted to D2D several years ago, his response to his complaints of poor delivery results by the USPS was that the USPS considered a

standard mail piece to be successfully delivered if it makes it to 93% or more of the households it is supposed to go to. That's not good enough for D2D. Without exception, it has to be 100% delivered to the door or drive. Deliveries that are dropped in the street or on the curb, hung on fences, garage doors or (heaven forbid) mailboxes are trash at best and can hurt a client's and a company's business reputation. The lone exception to the door is the yard or drive for many newspaper's total market coverage packages or free newspaper/shoppers, both items that consumers expect and look forward to each week.

*In summary, four things you always need to remember and the one thing you don't want to ever forget:* (1) A D2D advertising campaign is a science and should be treated as one (2) Response rates cannot be rattled off on a general or average basis because it varies by product, category and most certainly the offer. Suffice to say they are usually very successful (3) Point the carrier to the door or drive and then make sure they go put it there on the day the client asked for (4) Very important, if you feel inclined to be defensive about D2D distribution because some people want to try and paint an outdated picture of the *less than desirables* walking through neighborhoods, don't do it. Our delivery practices, mapping, tracking and inventory control are every bit as sophisticated as anybody's (5) and the one thing to never forget is this: **the doorhangers job is to create store traffic, get the phone ringing or increase visitors to a website. If it's a good or great offer, people will read it and respond. The rest of the sale is up to the client.**

*Note: This is the first of two Front Door Delivery articles planned for the AAPS Update. We hope to help your company be more effective and increase sales with the points contained within. Watch for the second one in the January-February 2012 edition of the AAPS Update. □*

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The AAPS will work to unite the private delivery industry by promoting a standard of quality, providing a voice in governmental affairs, informing and educating members, maintaining an ethical environment and protecting the vital interests of our industry.