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You Can Mail That?

June 28, 2012 | by Annabel Cohen

[Creativity](#), [Dimensional Mail](#)



Note: Before sending something eye-catching through the mail, make sure your unique mailer meets U.S. Postal Service mailing and standards requirements.

Adventurous marketers have sent plenty of oddities through the mail, ranging from watermelons to pieces of wedding cake. In fact, you can send live bees and goose chicks via Parcel Post®. Tales of slapping labels on umbrellas, bricks and such — by both marketers and regular folk — abound.

And why not?

According to direct marketer Bruce Moyer, it's all about breaking through the clutter.

“Our company found that the open rate for three-dimensional items, such as things that come in a box, is greater than 95 percent,” Moyer says. Items sent to prospects are usually kept, he says, “so they’re looking at this stuff on their desk all day long, getting the repetition of the message. Real estate is about location, location, location. Marketing is all about the frequency of the message.”

Success with excess still means you must make sure the mailing supports the campaign’s message and goals. This type of “infotainment marketing,” as Mary Ellen Nichols, marketing director at Bodek and Rhodes, an apparel wholesale group, calls it, is all about “creating an experience” for the recipient.

And once you know what you want to say, “use the message and exploit it all you can,” she adds.

While most marketers may never choose to mail live fowl or stinging insects to their prospects, these examples do get the creative juices flowing for ideas about original, maybe unusual and certainly memorable marketing materials.

Here is a look at a few campaigns that took a chance and grabbed the attention of their target audience with unique mailers.

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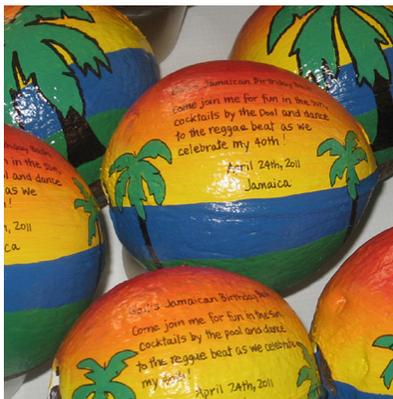
When Lisa Suhadolnik, owner of Coconut Greetings, an Ohio company specializing in painted coconut greetings, invitations and promotional incentives, lived in Hawaii, a chance conversation at a Post Office™ gave her a nutty business idea.

Finding that coconuts can be mailed without a box, she began painting them as invitations, incentives and promotions.

One client, a country music television station, sent 800 coconuts to DJs around the country promoting a new reality series, which was filmed in Hawaii.

The coconuts were a natural fit. And they were kept as mementos.

“It’s amazing how many people like the coconut idea,” says Suhadolnik. “Most people don’t have a coconut, so we’ve found that people usually keep them.”



What’s a beach party without a beach ball?

Valerie Hayman Sklar, president and owner of Michigan marketing promotional products company Corporate Specialties, mailed inflated beach balls — not in boxes — imprinted with an invitation to a corporate beach party. With 100% recall and retention, according to Sklar, “guests were amazed when the balls were delivered — it was the talk of the office. They were kept for a very long time — no one wanted to throw them away after the party.”

Delicious logos, shoes and even a telephone

Chocolatier Gayle Harte, owner of Gayle’s Chocolate, has created chocolate promotions — including life-sized shoes, telephones and logo-branded treats — for nearly three decades.

Her chocolate gifts always include a “tasty” message that relates to clients’ goals. She says that 100% of her packages are opened and shared.

The chocolate mailers, however, must go into boxes with additional packaging to prevent them from moving around. Cold packs are added to prevent the chocolate from melting (as chocolate melts at body temperature).



Wild campaign sends wildflower mix

mix

Bruce Moyer, currently vice president of marketing for GPX Software, a start-up company, worked for a marketing agency in Chicago that had a client in the wildflower seed business.

As an introduction to a new product, the company sent about 1,000 leading retail buyers each a 4x4-inch tin cube of the wildflower mix, each packed in its own box, intended for retail shelf distribution. “We could do this because there wasn’t a large number of retail buyers, but each represented a large

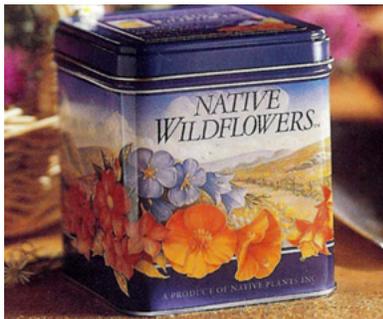
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potential order, and the cost of mailing was about \$5 each,” says Moyer. “So, for \$5,000, we got noticed. One order more than covered the cost of the mailings. They (the retailers) buy cases of this stuff.”

Having a picnic

Mary Ellen Nichols, director of marketing at Bodek and Rhodes, an apparel wholesale group in Philadelphia, is no stranger to creative mailings. When the company opened a new warehouse in the Midwest, it wanted to get across the message that this family-owned business that provides imprintable active wear to promotions companies, was a friendly partner. Rather

than have reps make cold calls to prospects, the company paved the way with a series of unique mailers to drive home the message that doing business with Bodek and Rhodes “is a picnic.”

First mailing: A barbecue spatula delivered in a box with the message that Bodek and Rhodes would be “grilling up” a new warehouse in your area. Second mailing: A citronella candle and a message about “working out the bugs” of the new warehouse that would be open soon. Third mailing: A whole watermelon — mailed without a box but with a label, made to mimic a “while you were out “ note, with the message “It’s delicious when we open in your backyard.” The addresses were handwritten in permanent marker directly onto the watermelons.

The mailings went to 100 of the company’s biggest prospects, which allowed the reps to make “warm” calls by asking, “Did you get my watermelon?” Responses included, “The guy with the watermelon is on the phone,” says Nichols. “Everyone knew who we were. The mailing resulted in 100% recall and 100 new account openings with sales of more than \$1 million in the first year.”

Hit 'em like a ton of bricks

Advertising creative director Barb Brodbeck went a heftier route. “I mailed a full-size brick with my résumé to land my job, with the message, ‘Looking to build your staff? If so, get a load of this heavyweight...’ She got the job.

Message in a baby bottle

Bodek and Rhodes also created a unique mailer to promote a new location grand opening (new baby in town). The mailer featured messages inside baby bottles. Mailing labels were affixed directly to the bottles (no boxes or envelopes) and sent to prospects as well as the local press.

The grand opening was covered in 100% of the publications that received them. “When you get a baby bottle in the mail, do you have to open it?” asked Nichols. “Of course you do.”

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