

The Mail Moment: Making A Connection

Today's consumers are busier than ever—and advertisers have taken full advantage of life on the run to deliver messages wherever and whenever possible. Consumers are inundated with television, radio, print, email, web pop-ups and outdoor advertising. Too often for consumers, the result is sensory overload, and they tune-out the ads surrounding them. Faced with this reality, marketers have to be smarter than ever in finding ways to cut through the cluttered marketplace and successfully capture a moment of consumer attention. In a comprehensive study from the United States Postal Service®, Direct Mail proved to be the vehicle that delivers that moment.

Marketers find hope from a surprising source.

Traditionally, the U.S. Postal Service® has served the country's major mailers by focusing on operational issues—efficiently “moving the mail” from point A to point B. However, the Postal Service™ also assists companies in the areas of Communications and Marketing. To effectively provide this service, the Postal Service researched consumers' mail behavior in the home and found significant marketing insights indicating how U.S. consumers value and interact with their mail.

The Postal Service's “Gateway to the Household®” study revealed the unique power of the mail to unobtrusively enter the everyday lives of consumers—thus, the solution to today's advertising challenge.

The study uncovered the personal and welcome nature of mail as an advertising medium. Consumers demonstrated a positive and emotional connection to the mail unlike any other advertising. They have embraced the mail as part of their lives and have come to anticipate what has been dubbed as the *Mail Moment*. A Mail Moment takes place in personal spaces where people spend time comfortably and are able to devote time and attention to reading the mail. By leveraging this unique opportunity, advertisers using Direct Mail can connect with consumers in a way no other medium can.

Now more than ever, mail is part of everyday life.

The “Gateway to the Household” research easily concluded that Direct Mail is relevant. Even in the electronic era, Direct Mail connects consumers to the country's marketplace. Consumer mail behavior is anchored in the needs associated with keeping a busy household running smoothly.

“Mail is like a receptionist because it tells me what's going on...it points me in the right direction.”

“... (Direct Mail) guides me, it tells me what's the best buy, I'd be lost without it.”

Additionally, 52% of households say they purchase products and services seen in advertising mail they receive. Consumers make mail an integral part of their daily home life routines. People devote time to sorting and reading their mail. The study revealed that bringing the mail inside the home has become a “trusted timeout”—a momentary diversion giving consumers time to relax and unwind.

74% of people read advertising mail weekly

Mail provides a vital portal for marketers to enter consumers' lives. The study revealed tremendous consumer pull for mail in all households. 57% of households expect no personal correspondence in their next mail delivery. However, a full 74% do expect advertising mail. Still, six days a week, almost every household in the U.S. will go to their mailbox.

Reasons for Bringing in the Mail

I Brought in the Mail Because I Wanted to...	Percentage Mentioning Statement
Keep in touch/informed about what's going on around me	57%
Bring myself up-to-date	46%
Relax, unwind	35%
Take a time-out	30%

Advertisers fighting for consumers' undivided attention will find it important that the Mail Moment is a timely and private affair. Those looking to carve out some valued "alone" time with their prospects or customers should feel confident using Direct Mail as their "Gateway" to the consumer. Nearly all consumers (97%) will sort their mail the day it arrives and 89% will sort it immediately.

80% of consumers are engaged in the mail they receive.

Consumers spend time alone with the mail 93% of the time. Even in the company of others, a consumer involved with his or her mail is typically split off from the group. For example, if others in the household are in the living room, the consumer will move to the kitchen (where 65% prefer to read their mail) to find quiet time for sorting the mail.

85% of people who sort the mail are the principal decision-makers on household spending.

In two-thirds of households, women are the people with exclusive responsibility for sorting mail. 95% of these "sorters" determine which advertising material is kept.

Consumers put their mail to work

When looking at consumers' experience interacting with particular kinds of mail, a new source of value was uncovered. *Job Value* proved to be another strong and unique differentiator for the mail medium.

Job Value is the belief that mail will make life richer.

Job Value is the ongoing relationship between consumers and the type of experience they want mail to make happen. They assign specific needs for the mail to fulfill and determine Job Value by the effect it will have on their lives. The study showed there are three main Jobs for mail:

- **Bettering self and home life** – provides pleasure for the consumer by projecting images of what life could be.
- **Unwinding life's pressures** – provides comfort by providing something to take a peaceful time-out with.
- **Managing the household** – brings order to the commercial side of home life.

Advertisers can improve the value of mail pieces they send by creating the type of experience the consumer wants to happen. To provide Job Value to better a consumer's self and home life, pieces should be interesting and helpful. For unwinding a consumer's life pressure, the mail should be easy and fun to use. To bring order to the commercial side of a consumer's home life, the mail should help manage household business by commanding attention and providing helpful information. These insights can help businesses market relevant information to consumers through Direct Mail and use the powerful Mail Moment to capture consumer attention.

A relevant message is a welcome message.

Even with all of this positive energy surrounding the mailbox, not all mail received is considered positive. Non-targeted, irrelevant clutter in the mailbox erodes the value that consumers see in mail. Consumers must see Job Value or relevance to their lives to appreciate the mail received. 71% of consumers respond to Direct Mail based on their need for the product, seasonality or their perceived value of the offer. In addition, a highly-targeted approach benefits the marketer by helping produce greater response and a better Return-On-Investment (ROI).

Implications for Advertisers

Historically, industries that utilized the mail were those with direct sales propositions, trial offers, traffic-driving goals and ongoing customer communications strategies. But the current media environment and the ever-changing ways media is consumed by U.S. households have major advertisers re-evaluating their marketing strategy. The unique experience of the Mail Moment is the reason more major advertisers are incorporating more mail as a means of connecting with target audiences.

The results from the "Gateway to the Household[®]" study should open the eyes of all advertisers to the power and possibility of Direct Mail. It proves that Direct Mail offers one of the best channels of one-to-one communication between businesses and consumers. As consumer lives become busier, the personal appeal of Direct Mail and the opportunities of the Mail Moment will only continue to grow.

