

BETWEEN THE LINES

TAPPING THE POTENTIAL OF
21ST CENTURY DOCUMENTS

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The World of Dynamic Documents

All documents are not created equal.

Some are meant to serve as routine communication vehicles, produced and distributed as quickly and economically as possible. Others, such as those for prospects and customers, aspire to a higher purpose: to connect in a way that improves the bottom line.

In the market's eyes, these documents are your organization. Therefore, they must present you in the best possible light, regardless of whether their mission is to acquire new customers, build your brand, collect for a service, explain an account change, generate revenue or build customer loyalty. The question is, do they?

In far too many cases, documents fail to deliver. I'm not just referring to traditional direct mail, where response rates of 1 to 2 percent are considered a success. I'm also talking about emerging areas like digital direct marketing and social media, which CMOs are discovering can be as disappointing as they are enticing.

But there's an upside to document letdown—you can avoid it. Studies from a number of organizations, including Rochester Institute of Technology and PODi, the digital printing association, show that it's possible to increase the effectiveness of documents by a large margin, as high as a factor of 5x.¹

The key is to make static documents more dynamic. Here are just a few of the definitions the Oxford College Dictionary ascribes to the word dynamic:

1. Characterized by constant change, activity or progress
2. Positive in attitude and full of energy and new ideas
3. Stimulating development

Dynamic documents are all of the above and more. In a sense, they remain fluid, changing and adapting to meet highly specific goals while continually presenting your enterprise at its best. Leading organizations are already making their documents more dynamic by employing techniques that include:

- Customized messages delivered via one-to-one marketing and technology
- Content design based on behavioral science insights

- Adaptation of content across multiple communication channels
- Disciplined, end-to-end program management based on continuous improvement

By taking a dynamic approach, you can use internal and external data to create customized offers that appeal to recipients on a personal level. You can also design documents to drive desired behaviors, such as expanding the customer base, cross-selling or reducing operational costs like support center calls.

But the greatest benefits come from building continuous document programs that span the life cycle of your customer relationships and draw upon every communication channel at your command: the Web, personalized URLs, mobile platforms, the mail stream. And so on.

With dynamic documents, each touchpoint is not an end in itself. Instead, it is a means of collecting more feedback and deepening customer insights so that the next round of communications becomes even more personalized and effective. As a consequence, you not only continue to get better results, but also realize a better return on your investment.

Endnotes

1. Romano & Brody, Digital Printing Council, www.gain.net