

Time nears to rename discipline

DM legend Stan Rapp discusses why the term 'direct marketing' may soon be extinct.

Q: What is the mission for your two-year-old agency?

A: Engage is focused on customer engagement both online and offline with the added value of the gauging of results at the heart of direct marketing. We are thrilled to find that we chose a name that epitomizes the blend of engagement and direct marketing.



Q: When is the next acquisition now that Direct Impact, Ten United and Spun Logic are under your belt?

A: Growth right now is organic. As we come out of this downturn in the economy, we may consider growth by merger and acquisition.

Q: How have direct marketers adapted to the Internet?

A: A transformation began in the middle 1990s with a move to the Internet and World Wide Web. Direct marketers were slow to see that we were looking at a totally transformed new marketing that leaves the traditional view behind.

Q: How does your new book out this month, Reinventing Interactive and Direct Marketing, address this?

A: We brought together leading experts. The subject is too big for any one author to tackle at this point. The introduction to the book that I contributed introduces a new paradigm: iDirect, the growth engine at the intersection of digital technologies and direct marketing practices. The marketing luminaries contributing to the book from a variety of perspectives look at how both strategically and practically iDirect marketing leads to innovative, information-driven, insightful and iterative solutions.

Q: Is direct marketing still the right term?

A: No, it is not. The right term may be iDirect or it may be something else. We know the reliance on intrusive TV adv as a dominant force in building brands and sales is fading away. The big question is will interactive — sometimes referred to as digital — become the platform driving the new marketing, or will marketing directly be that platform? If the DMA and direct marketers do not embrace the transformation under a new banner, the term direct marketing will fade away. This is not an entirely new thought. We direct marketers do not have the luxury of time to arrive at what is needed. [We need] to be certain... that [marketers] fully understand the value of addressability, accountability and the other pillars of direct marketing.

Q: What are marketers getting wrong?

A: The biggest mistake... is an upside-down mentality. What we see is a focus on the new media as a starting point for planning. What we hear is, "what can I do to get friends for my brand on Facebook?" and "How do I take what I've done online and move it to mobile?" One thing hasn't changed and is not being addressed. What new insights do I have about the behavior and motivation of my customers? And what big new idea does that give birth to? Once you have that, then you look at the new media and don't forget the traditional media to see what carries out the execution of that idea.