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Achieve greater response with the power of TransPromo software.

By Kim Crowley

Smart marketers solicit engaging communications for the best results. Consumers respond well to messages that subtly embrace personal preferences and feature relevant offers. TransPromo documents go further, taking advantage of existing relationships and mixing personalized messages with transactional data. Sophisticated workflows comprised of hardware and software process large amounts of data quickly to effectively create and deliver TransPromo campaigns.

TransPromo is more than a document application. It's a breakthrough marketing platform made possible by a serendipitous set of circumstances, notes Scott Baker, VP, worldwide business development, GMC Software Technology. Increasing postal costs; multi-channel communications facilitated by affordable bandwidth; Web- and mobile-savvy consumers; high-speed color production printers; document composition software; as well as tools to leverage data from transaction and customer relationship management (CRM) databases are all factors in its success.

Software selection is an integral part of the solution, and every organization must evaluate their needs to ensure they employ the best product suited to their unique requirements. "First you must define TransPromo as it applies to the various organizations trying to implement it," says Scott Bannor, midwest regional sales manager, transpromotion subject matter expert, Elixir Technologies. In most cases, TransPromo applications integrate billing software, CRM platforms, and a robust document composition tool.

The Fundamentals

For TransPromo to be effective, marketers and software developers should stick to the basics. "Successful TransPromo print infrastructure comprises three basic elements—data handling and processing capabilities, digital printing presses capable of printing variable data in monochrome or color, and document composition and process automation software," explains Eric De Goeijen, VP of marketing, Production Printing Systems division, Océ North America.

Document composition software automates the creation of documents that combine account status information with variable text, images, and color or highlight graphics. "Open-architecture workflow links previously segregated devices to increase access to a variety of output capabilities. It enables a seamless flow and production of high volumes of personalized documents with an increased level of process automation," he adds.

"Due to the nature of transactional document systems, the message qualification process—which fires the rules to determine who gets what, where they get it, and how and when—must be high performance. Many transactional systems process hundreds of thousands of customers per run. The rule engine must qualify thousands of customers and hundreds of campaigns simultaneously to determine the outcome," states Nick Romano, president, Prinova.

The investment in software and related services for TransPromo solutions fluctuate based on functionality. For instance, "Lytrud Software customers typically invest up to \$30,000 for software, initial support, and training, depending upon the print equipment the software supports," notes Cynthia Osborn, worldwide technical marketing manager, Lytrud Software. Entry-level software for developing a TransPromo campaign starts in the tens of thousands and reaches into the millions.

How do organizations justify such a large investment? Baker states that a reasonable response rate for a conventional direct mail campaign is less than three percent. These communications "usually don't seem to apply to us, and we are right to think that the sender is employing the 'spray and pray' technique, hoping at least some will have the desired effect. With TransPromo, even a limited campaign could generate a response rate in excess of 20 percent or higher."

Those receiving bills and statements actually view them, many times more than once. "Therefore, targeted marketing messages printed on bills or statements have a high probability of actually being read," says Baker.

One critical aspect to a successful TransPromo campaign is the marketer's ability to measure and learn from results. "A document must be tracked through its lifecycle to capture the message offered on the document and ensure customer receipt. That knowledge is stored for measurement," notes Carrie T. Murphy, EDP, market development manager, Americas Group, InfoPrint Solutions Company.

Several TransPromo composition and delivery tools feature analytic functions. "A TransPromo solution must be more than just fire and forget. Tracking and reporting customer, campaign, and message statistics is critical for improving and evolving campaigns," states Romano.

TransPromo Sells

TransPromo communications allow organizations to inform customers of new programs, helpful tips, incentives, and vital information while addressing their specific needs. An appealing layout, the inclusion of color, and the addition of relevant graphs and promotional messages help marketers better serve customers, and marketers see benefits as well.

"The recipient's time is respected, and customers appreciate the clarity," says Scott Draeger, senior product manager, HP Exstream Software.

In addition to customer satisfaction, TransPromo helps organizations tackle some of their biggest challenges to date. Elixir's Bannor highlights two basic reasons why TransPromo is a hot topic. The first is cost cutting and improved effectiveness. "All organizations need to cut costs. They also need to improve the effectiveness of their customer communications. TransPromo offers both," he says. Industry buzz is the second reason. "Major industry players need a way to justify the cost of digital color printing. Data center printing, print on demand, and variable data were buzzwords and concepts used in the past to broaden the market for production-speed digital printing. TransPromo is used in the same way today," he explains.

While the success of a campaign is often measured by response rates, a compelling success driver is the difference in open rates, which Draeger says typically exceed 90 percent for statements. "The major difference between direct marketing and TransPromo's effectiveness is that open rates are massive compared to an unexpected direct mail solicitation," he says.

The response from TransPromo—whether measured in customer satisfaction, retention, or purchases—speaks for itself. Results from campaigns driven by InfoPrint Solutions Company for several large brands indicate a double-digit increase in customer response with color TransPromo. "When we added offers based upon customer data and business rules, these response rates were in the triple digits," notes InfoPrint's Murphy. "A fully deployed TransPromo solution, where customer data was mined and analyzed and predictive modeling was applied, resulted in an overwhelming four digit increase over the control group."

Romano offers a customer example, a large health payor that saw a 47 percent shift from brand to generic drugs through TransPromo campaign.

"Like any other communication, the devil is in the details," says Elizabeth Gooding, president, Insight Forums LLC. "A well-designed and well-executed TransPromo campaign can deliver double or even triple digit results. But, if poorly designed or poorly executed, you're not going to experience good results."

TransPromo Hurdles

Several issues challenge a TransPromo campaign's success. The greatest concerns include data availability and timing, image library management, and color quality. Testing procedures and image file size are additional considerations that may be overlooked when a TransPromo strategy is initially implemented.

The data required to develop a campaign and perform analysis is often restricted or housed in different systems. Another issue is "having the most current data available at the time of data processing and composition," says Murphy. Lengthy data processing cycles impede regular document processing time.

Moreover, statement data is often generated from antiquated and difficult to modify systems and there is a tendency to add more graphics.

Tailoring TransPromo to different audiences' personal preferences is essential. "The greatest challenge is understanding the customer. Older recipients may not want marketing material included in their statements. Younger recipients may not want

printed documents at all. Once the authoring organization understands individual requirements they may realize that TransPromo to one person is something entirely different to another," says Bannor.

Some marketers miss the mark by failing to keep TransPromo messaging updated. "Many companies concentrate efforts on the document design and do a great job with initial messages, but if change management is not built into the process the result is repetitious or stale messages. To make the most of TransPromo, a strategy for keeping content relevant is essential," says Alice Fackre, director of marketing, PrintSoft.

Hardware is not always foolproof. Select software solutions allow for quick adjustments to get a print job back on track. For TransPromo workflows based on PDF, DocuLynx Mercury Re-Print Software enables recovery from printer jams, allowing individual or a series of documents to be selected from the Mercury repository and rerun on the inline production printer without re-spooling the entire print job.

Many pieces in a TransPromo workflow must work together to achieve success. "Realistically, most people aren't experts in all areas, and TransPromo demands a level of collaboration most applications don't approach," says Baker. "The challenge is to show customers and partners how the pieces work together."

It's Time to Get Personal

Most marketers squeeze everything they can out of a tight budget. Organizations search for ways to reduce costly processes. An investment in TransPromo may simultaneously alleviate both issues.

"Almost every industry is struggling to cut costs while facing increasing competition for a decreasing universe of viable customers. Optimizing customer communications today is an economic imperative," states Gooding.

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