

Pressure Cooker

By Andrea Stemm

As marketers, we feel the pressure of bringing in prospects, leads and sales to the company to increase revenues and ROI. There are many things to consider in the evolving realm of marketing and advertising. Who is the best audience for your product or service? How do you reach that audience? What kind of response rate can you expect? How will your sales team follow-up, or better yet, will they follow-up? What media or channels should you use? What offer should you include in your copy? When should you do your promotion?

All of these questions can start to build anxiety in any marketer. Vice Presidents and Chief Marketing Officers are turning to you to make these decisions and manage the day-to-day coordination of these programs for the company.

The best place to start is with previous campaign history. What has worked in the past? Why did it work? Take that building block and create a test campaign. Timing can change the results or response of any promotion. Therefore, you can't just repeat a direct mailer or online banner that you ran last September and expect the same results. Weather, news, events, politics, economic state among other variables can influence response.

Take a previous direct mailer you ran that performed well (generated more leads or sales) and change something about it. The new mailer becomes your test and the old mailer becomes your control. Maybe you change the offer or reason to respond. Maybe you keep the look the same but change the tone of the copy. You are now starting to build a strategy to "beat your control" in order to continually increase the performance or return of your direct marketing efforts.

This builds measurable trend and test history. Over time these efforts will lead you to receive the strongest response. If your company hasn't tracked or measured direct marketing in the past, now is a good time to start. There are quick, easy and cost effective ways to track response for each of your campaigns. When you track your efforts, you gain ways to measure and report back to the top executives. It will help you trend future performance of your campaigns and allow you to project revenues and breakeven points more accurately.

You can avoid the feeling of being thrown into a pressure cooker. When you have the knowledge to predict or trend the performance of future promotions it tends to ease the pressure received from CMO's and top executives. You become more in control of your efforts and that leads you to a more methodical and thought out campaign strategy.