

# Promotional Mix Lesson 4: Direct Mail

**SUBMITTED BY:** Leya Matthew

**SUBJECT(S):** Marketing

**GRADE LEVEL(S):** 9, 10, 11, 12

## ≡ OVERVIEW:

In this lesson, we come to the last element of the promotional mix — direct advertising mail. Unlike the other promotional avenues (advertising, publicity, sponsorship, etc.), direct mail is perhaps an undesirable or inefficiently used tool. However, some companies seem to have mastered the art of using this tool effectively. The Knowledge@Wharton article gives a comprehensive picture of what works, when and why in direct advertising. Building on the varied perspectives, students then re-design the direct marketing strategy of a company they have experience interacting with.

## ≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Marketing, II. Consumers and Their Behavior
- Marketing, III. External Factors
- Marketing, IV. The Marketing Mix

## Common Core Standard(s):

1. CCR Standard for Reading: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it.
2. CCR Standards for Listening: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on each other's ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning and use of evidence and rhetoric.

3. CCR Standards for Speaking: Present information, findings and supporting evidence in such a way that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, and the organization, development and style are appropriate to the task, purpose and audience.

**Objectives/Purposes:**

In this lesson, students will (1) analyze the effectiveness of direct mail strategies of various products/services, and (2) design a direct mail strategy for a related product/service.

**Knowledge@Wharton Article:** [“In E-mail Marketing, Consumers Weed Out the Weakest Links”](#)

**Other Resources/Materials:** Handout, Internet access, Examples of direct mail

**Activity:****1. Orientation (5-8 mins)**

The teacher introduces the concept of direct mail through anecdotal examples. For example, I may choose to open my email account and open a direct mail item. Alongside, I also show catalogues that I receive by mail, and other direct mail examples. For my class I choose to show the example of an email, a catalogue and a promotional offer that was mailed to my address. Students will be encouraged to contribute personal anecdotal experiences as well.

The teacher now asks students to interpret the purpose of each item. This will of course depend on the content of the particular item. The purpose of the catalogue could be to stimulate interest with glossy pictures and to inform about new items and offers. The purpose of the email might be to remind the customer about offers. The sales offer might have been mailed to inform about offers and to stimulate interest.

Using these examples, the teacher defines the concept of direct mail as a promotional strategy to deliver advertising content directly to the customer through postal/email systems.

**2. Group Discussion/Concept Mapping (5 mins)**

The teacher lists the various elements of the promotional mix on the blackboard/whiteboard and asks students to connect direct mail with the other elements.

- Advertising

- Public Relations/Publicity
- Sponsorship
- Sales Promotions

From the earlier examples itself, it will be easy to connect Direct Mail to Advertising and Sales Promotions. Many sales promotional items are mailed directly to the customer, and direct mail forms a kind of advertising for the brand/product. Even if you do not use the promotional item, you are still made aware of and reminded of the brand/product.

### 3. Work with Knowledge@Wharton article (12 mins)

Read, “In E-mail Marketing, Consumers Weed Out the Weakest Links,” individually.

Students are then asked to work in pairs to answer the following questions. Each pair is given the questions as handouts with space to answer them on the handout itself.

- List the four kinds of direct e-mails. What is the defining characteristic of each kind?
- What kind of direct e-mail strategies does Travelocity use, with what effect?

### 3. Work in small groups (8 mins)

After students have answered the questions, the teacher randomly forms the pairs into small groups. The small groups are asked to choose one of the items used in the initial activity. The group will be handed over the direct mail item they chose. For example, one group will get the catalogue, another the sales offer, and the last group will work with the email offer. Students are now asked to use the analysis from the Knowledge@Wharton article to revise the direct mail strategy of the product/service. It will also be mentioned that the items that were displayed were discarded unopened and retrieved only for the purpose of this lesson. The companies had failed in their marketing purpose and students are asked to suggest some revisions. This could be in the form of additional data mining (on the part of the company), weeding out unresponsive customers, better targeting, customized services, testing mails before sending them, or follow-up plans. It is clarified that they have 8 minutes to prepare and 3 minutes to present their suggestions orally to their class.

### 4. Presentation to class (15 mins)

The groups are asked to present their analysis. Other groups are encouraged to provide constructive criticism — *What was insightful about the plan? Do you have anything to add to this plan? Was there anything about the plan you felt was erroneous?*

#### 5. Discussion and Wrap-up (5 mins)

The teacher synthesizes the presentations with the analysis and the earlier activities by touching on the strengths and limitations of direct mail and connecting direct mail strategies with segmentation and targeting.

**Practice Outside of the Classroom:** The next time you act on direct advertising mail (whether you toss it or make a purchase), consider the assumptions the company makes in trying to contact you personally.

#### **What Worked and What I Would Do Differently:**

The final activity in this lesson can be extended into a project where students are asked to collect discarded direct mails from their community, survey consumer behavior through interviews with members of their community, and use this information to customize the direct mail strategies of the discarded items. Or, they can be asked to collect direct mail received at their homes over a month to conduct the same project.

**Related Knowledge@Wharton Article:** [“Mining Data for Nuggets of Knowledge”](#)