MULTICHANNEL MARKETING
MAXIMIZING PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT AND ROI

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

Demand Metric
PFL

Benchmark Report
The most effective marketing channel may be the one you’re not yet using.
Introduction
Here’s the deal: at Demand Metric we get to work with a lot of well-known MarTech solution providers.

When one of them – the leading provider of an innovative B2B digital marketing platform – revealed to us that they rely heavily on multi-channel campaigns, with direct mail as the tip of the spear for their lead generation, we took notice.

They shared that as many as 40% of their leads are captured or influenced through their tightly integrated direct mail efforts.

The timing of this revelation was serendipitous, as we had just wrapped up the key findings for this research report, and it added an exclamation point to the results, which this report will share in detail.
Executive Summary
Executive Summary

To understand the importance of multichannel marketing and the power of intentional, coordinated marketing efforts, PFL and Demand Metric partnered to research how marketers are using this strategy, and to analyze the indicators that signal higher overall performance.

The goal of the study was to collect data to identify best practices and help marketers know how to reach specific audiences, and when to use particular tactics within their multichannel campaigns. This report shares the research results and insights from this study.

Study results show that direct mail is anything but “old school” or “dead.” It’s highly effective and ideal for reaching specific audiences. And, when it’s deployed as an integrated component of multichannel campaigns, the results are impressive.

While direct mail isn’t a new strategy, there’s a new strategy around its deployment, and this learning is too impactful for marketers to ignore.

This report details the results and insights from over 575 participants and the analysis of the study data. For more detail on the survey participants, please refer to the Appendix.

Some of the key findings from this study include:

- **Average response rates improve significantly** with a 62 percent increase in those reporting good or very good response rates.
- The **ROI of multichannel campaigns improves significantly** with an 80 percent increase in those reporting good or very good ROI.

Just over half of this study’s participants include direct mail in their multichannel campaigns, and **80 percent of them report that direct mail improves multichannel campaign performance.**

**The executive, or C-Suite, audience is the most sought after by study participants.** Events and direct mail are the most effective channels to reach them.

While postcards are the most frequently used direct mail format, the **dimensional format does the best job of representing the brand.**

Respondents using 7 or more channels in their mix are 26 percent more likely to indicate their multichannel programs produce good or very good response.
Multichannel Campaign Mix
**Multichannel Campaign Mix**

An excellent place to start sharing the results of this study is with an inventory of channels that comprise multichannel campaigns.

**Figure 1** shows various channels and their frequency of use.

In this study, Events include webinars, tradeshows, and live events. Outbound Business Development Representative or Sales Development Representative includes the use of telephone, email, or social media as part of these functions.

The “Other channel” responses included the use of text/SMS, web chat, broadcast media, and partnership marketing.

---

**FIGURE 1**

**Multichannel Campaign Channel Mix**

- **Email**: 91%
- **Social media**: 81%
- **Events**: 73%
- **Display advertising/remarketing**: 60%
- **Direct mail**: 56%
- **Search marketing/PPC**: 51%
- **Outbound BDR/SDR**: 47%
- **Content syndication**: 35%
- **Other channel**: 5%
**Figure 2** displays how many channels, on average, study participants are using for a typical multichannel marketing campaign.

Two-thirds of study participants use between three and five channels for their campaigns. It’s less common for campaigns to include six or more channels – only 15 percent in this study average that many channels in a campaign.

Analysis of this channel data reveals a relationship between the number of channels in use and the response rate (see Figure 12 and accompanying narrative) for multichannel campaigns:

- **7 or more channels**: 77 percent report good or very good response rates.
- **4 to 6 channels**: 69 percent report good or very good response rates.
- **3 or fewer channels**: 61 percent report good or very good response rates.

This data suggests that to get better response rates, marketers should consider adding more channels to the mix for their campaigns.

**FIGURE 2**
Average Number of Channels in a Typical Campaign

Half the study participants are using between three and four channels.

- 10 or more: 4%
- 9 channels: 0%
- 8 channels: 2%
- 7 channels: 4%
- 6 channels: 5%
- 5 channels: 17%
- 4 channels: 21%
- 3 channels: 29%
- 2 channels: 11%
- 1 channel: 3%
- I don’t know: 4%
Each channel has its strengths and weaknesses, which is a reason why it's necessary to use multiple channels in a campaign. Study participants rated the channels from Figure 1 for their effectiveness in reaching the target audience. Figure 3 shares the results of this ranking.

Common sense suggests that when comparing the effectiveness data from Figure 3 to the usage data in Figure 1, the most effective channels are also the most used. Our research found that this isn’t the case. Only events occupy a top three ranking on both lists. Marketers are not consistently using the most effective channels.

While the study didn’t investigate this further, it seems apparent that marketers are guilty of using the channels that are easiest or most familiar, and not necessarily those that work the best. A later section of this report explores which channels work best for specific target audiences.

While direct mail is not a new strategy, the strategy of how to best deploy it has changed significantly. Figure 3 depicts that condition.

Generic direct mail performs among the least effective at reaching target audiences, but when direct mail is branded well, personalized and integrated with multichannel campaign technology, it moves to the second most effective channel.

This report will explore in greater detail the impact of direct mail integration, branding, and personalization.
The Direct Mail Channel
The Direct Mail Channel

As a channel, direct mail is no outlier, with over half (56 percent) of study participants reporting usage. There are multiple types of direct mail, and Figure 4 shows the usage frequency for the most common types.

Marketers are most familiar with postcard and letter formats, and report that they use those formats most. Postcards are the least expensive direct mail format. Many marketers favor postcards because there is nothing to open: the message is easily visible.

Dimensional mail formats are a close third in usage. This format includes pieces that are not flat, like the other types, but have an element of depth to them. A dimensional mail piece is often sent in boxes or tubes, and its very form invites opening it. These pieces evoke natural curiosity and tend to drive higher response rates.
All formats can represent a brand well, but some seem to do a better job than others. As a multichannel marketing campaign component, direct mail can represent a brand in a unique way, and Figure 5 provides insight into how well direct mail formats do this.

For all formats, more than half of the study participants say that direct mail represents their brand well or very well. The postcard, the most used format (Figure 4), ranks lowest for how well it represents the brand, while dimensional ranks well above all other formats in this regard.

The dimensional format is very strong at representing the brand because it can visually and interactively communicate brand values. When considering just those who use dimensional, its overall channel effectiveness ranking, shown in Figure 3, improves.

Filtering this channel effectiveness data by those who use dimensional improves generic direct mail effectiveness from 61 percent to 70 percent (shown in Figure 3).

**FIGURE 5**
Brand Representation Effectiveness Through Direct Mail

Dimensional mail does the best job of representing the sending brand.
As Figure 2 shows, marketers rarely rely on a single channel for their campaigns. The channel mix that marketers use in their campaigns should ideally have a symbiotic relationship, with one channel enhancing the performance of the other channels.

This study examines how additive direct mail is as a channel when it is part of multichannel campaigns. Figure 6 shares how complementary direct mail is.

According to study participants, direct mail clearly enhances multichannel campaign performance.

80% of study participants report that direct mail improves multichannel campaign performance.

**FIGURE 6**

How Well Direct Mail Improves Multichannel Campaign Performance

52 percent report a moderate to major improvement in campaign performance when direct mail is one of the channels.
Today’s marketers rely heavily on marketing automation solutions to manage and track the performance of their multichannel campaigns. Since direct mail isn’t a digital channel, however, many marketers may assume that the direct mail channel must exist in a silo outside of the marketing automation system.

This assumption isn’t true, and this study measured the degree of integration that study participants reported between their direct mail efforts and their marketing automation platforms. Figure 7 shows the status of this integration.

Study participants used the scale below to rate the integration of direct mail shown in Figure 7:

- **None**: “Direct mail is sent manually or through a separate process.”
- **Low**: “We manually transfer selected contacts from one system to another.”
- **Moderate**: “We can push lists from one system to another.”
- **High**: “Direct mail is sent by a core marketing technology but measurement is separate or not available.”
- **Complete**: “Direct mail sends and measurement are an inherent part of our marketing technology.”

It’s an exception for marketers who include direct mail in their channel mix to not have some degree of integration between direct mail and their marketing technology stack. Two-thirds of participants in this study report moderate to complete integration.
Marketers are familiar with the strategy of personalizing content, and many studies exist that prove that personalized content is more effective. This study sought to understand the level of direct mail personalization.

Using the following scale, study participants rated their direct mail personalization:

- **None**: “We use the same content.”
- **A little**: “We can change content like name and company.”
- **A lot**: “We can select content pieces and change content like name and company.”
- **Completely**: “We can select content pieces and change many elements of content on any of them.”

Marketing technology enables personalization. Analysis of this study’s data showed that the level of integration shown in Figure 7 has a big effect on the ability to personalize direct mail. **Figure 8** summarizes direct mail personalization by comparing two segments: those that have no, low, or moderate integration to those with high or complete integration.

Respondents with high or complete integration of direct mail to their core multichannel technology are 126.9 percent more likely to indicate personalization levels as a lot or complete. When integration is moderate or worse, over two-thirds are doing little to no personalization of direct mail. The lack of integration is a serious disadvantage when it comes to personalizing direct mail.

The role of marketing technology in enabling personalization, even for direct mail, is quite clear. **Well over half of those who have achieved high levels of integration are also more advanced at personalizing direct mail.**
Target Audiences and Channels
Target Audiences and Channels

This study looks at the audiences marketers are trying to reach, and which channels do the best job of reaching them. **Figure 9** displays the target audiences that study participants are trying to reach.

60% of study participants are targeting the C-Suite with their multichannel marketing.

**FIGURE 9**

Target Audiences for Multichannel Campaigns

Executives are the most frequently targeted audience in multichannel campaigns.
The audience that marketers in the study most often target with their multichannel campaigns is the C-suite or executive audience.

**FIGURE 10**  
Channel Effectiveness by Target Audience

Data from this study confirms what most marketers feel is true: the executive audience is the hardest audience to reach. For any target audience, particularly the executive one, knowing which channels are most effective at reaching them is imperative.

**Figure 10** summarizes what study participants shared about the effectiveness of various channels for reaching these target audiences.

**Figure 10** shows that each target audience is best reached by a different mix of channels. Only two channels, however, are in the top three for effectiveness for four of the five target audiences: events and direct mail. No other channel shows that level of effectiveness consistency.
Marketers should first understand their target audience’s preferences, and match the channel mix to those preferences. Table 1 summarizes the top channels for each of the audiences in Figure 10.

Each of the audiences shown in Figure 9 is best reached using a specific set of channels. Marketers that use the same channel for all audiences are compromising their effectiveness.

The data from Figure 10 also confirms that the C-Suite is the hardest audience to reach. To make this determination, we calculated the average effectiveness of all channels by audience. Table 1 shows this summary, with the C-Suite having the lowest average, implying the greatest difficulty in reaching them. The sales and marketing audience, by contrast, has the highest channel effectiveness average, implying this audience is most easily reached.

### TABLE 1

Summary of top channels for reaching audiences shown in Figure 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Audience</th>
<th>Top 3 Channels</th>
<th>Average Effectiveness for All Channels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-suite/Executive</td>
<td>1. Events</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Direct mail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Outbound BDR/SDR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>1. Events</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Content syndication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Email</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial/Purchasing</td>
<td>1. Direct mail</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Outbound BDR/SDR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales/Marketing</td>
<td>1. Events</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Email</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Direct mail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End user</td>
<td>1. Content syndication</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Search marketing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Direct mail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The adage, “timing is everything” certainly applies to marketing campaigns. Marketers are wise to question the timing and cadence of their communications to the audiences they are trying to reach.

The participants in this study give us insight into the critical question of which communication formats work best for each of the audiences shown in Figure 10. **Figure 11** shows what study participants shared as the best communication cadence for each audience.

The C-Suite stands out as a special case. According to study participants, all audiences except this one are best reached through the approach that sends more frequent messages on a regular basis, such as daily, weekly, or monthly.

**For members of the C-Suite, targeting them with messages triggered based on specific needs is the best approach.** The underlying assumptions for this approach are:

1. The right marketing technology is in place to sense these needs.
2. Technology integrations exist for all the campaign channels that target this audience.

**FIGURE 11**

**Communication Cadence that Works Best for Each Audience**

Most audiences are best reached through more frequent messages, except for the C-Suite.
Campaign Response Rate and ROI
Campaign Response Rate and ROI

Two key multichannel campaign metrics that marketers track (or should track) are response rate and return on investment (ROI). This study measured both of these metrics and found several correlations that impact them.

Figure 12 shows how participants rated the response to their multichannel marketing campaigns.

Two-thirds of study participants report good or very good response to their campaigns.
The study’s definition of campaign responses includes clicks, opens, or registrations. Several correlations exist in the study data regarding multichannel campaign response rates. The first is simply whether or not direct mail was in the channel mix for a campaign.

Figure 13 shows a 9.5 percent lift in respondents indicating response as good or very good from their multichannel campaigns.

**Figure 13**
Response to Multichannel Campaigns: With and Without Direct Mail

When direct mail is part of the channel mix, campaigns have slightly better response rates.

- 9.5% of study participants were more likely to report good or very good response rates when direct mail was part of the channel mix.
The inclusion of generic direct mail elements in a multichannel campaign doesn’t have a dramatic impact on response, but **direct mail that’s tightly integrated to the multichannel technology changes everything.**

We see a 41.7 percent increase in respondents reporting good or very good response rates (85% vs only 60%) when their direct mail integration is high to complete. **Figure 14** shows this result.

**FIGURE 14**
Response to Multichannel Campaigns Based on Integration of Direct Mail with MarTech

Integrating direct mail with the multichannel campaign technology has a big effect on response rates.
Most marketers would assume that personalization lifts response rates for campaigns, and that assumption holds true for this study. In multi-channel campaigns, personalizing direct mail a lot or completely makes it 38 percent more likely for marketers to realize good or very good response rates, as Figure 15 shows.

As Figure 13 shows, including direct mail in the mix for multichannel campaigns improves response rates.

Integrating and personalizing direct mail amplifies response rates, with 90 percent of study participants who do both reporting good or very good response rates.

**FIGURE 15**
Response to Multichannel Campaigns Based on Direct Mail Personalization

Personalized direct mail generates significantly better response rates to multichannel campaigns.

- Direct mail personalization a lot to completely
- Direct mail personalization none to a little

38% of study participants were more likely to report good or very good response rates when they personalized direct mail a lot or completely.
Response rates are important, but ROI is usually the critical metric for multichannel campaigns. **Figure 16** shows the average ROI participants report for multichannel campaigns.

**FIGURE 16**

Average ROI from Multichannel Campaigns

Well over half of the study’s participants get good or very good ROI.
As was true for response rates, we found several correlations to producing higher levels of ROI for multichannel campaigns. The simple inclusion of direct mail in the channel mix was one of them, and Figure 17 shows a 12.8 percent lift in respondents indicating good or very good ROI.

**FIGURE 17**

ROI for Multichannel Campaigns: With and Without Direct Mail

When direct mail is part of the channel mix, campaigns have better ROI.
When direct mail is in the channel mix, there is an improvement in ROI, but greater impact comes in the way that marketers include direct mail in the mix.

**Figure 18** shows a 62.7 percent lift in participants reporting good or very good ROI when their direct mail integration to their marketing technology is high to complete.

As Figure 18 shows, when allowing direct mail to participate as a full-fledged member of a multichannel campaign via integration, it can drive a much higher ROI.

62.7% of study participants were more likely to report good or very good ROI when their direct mail integration to their marketing technology was high to complete.
Study participants realize a similar ROI impact through direct mail personalization.

As Figure 19 shows, when personalizing direct mail a lot or completely, we see a 45.3 percent lift in participants reporting multichannel campaign ROI performance of good or very good.
There’s no doubt that **thoughtfully adding direct mail to the mix for multichannel campaigns pushes the response rates and ROI in the direction that marketers want.** Other success factors also contribute to campaign success, as Figure 20 summarizes.

Many things contribute to the success of multichannel marketing campaigns, but in this study, the basics top the list: having accurate data, understanding what the target audience needs, and staying on brand with messaging.

Focusing elsewhere before ensuring audience needs are well understood and data is accurate compromises the effectiveness of even the most creative campaign.

---

**FIGURE 20**

*Multichannel Campaign ROI Success Factors*

Study participants identified data accuracy as the top success factor to produce ROI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Factor</th>
<th>% High Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data accuracy</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding audience needs</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design &amp; branding of delivered messages</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalizing delivered messages</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scalability</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestration/coordination with multiple channels</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel attribution</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix of offline &amp; online tactics</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Insights from PFL Customers
Research Insights from PFL Customers

PFL partnered with Demand Metric to conduct this study. PFL is a leading provider of Tactile Marketing Automation solutions as well as printing, mailing, and fulfillment services.

Its customers represent a segment of marketers that produce the highest results and are role models for the multichannel and direct mail best practices this report has identified.

As such, segmenting PFL customer responses provides a rare and unique opportunity to see how well the PFL vision for tactile marketing delivers value.
To understand the value that PFL customers are getting, we’ll present some comparisons of the PFL customer segment to the rest of the study sample.

- The PFL segment is **88 percent more likely to use the highest performing direct mail format: dimensional format** (66 percent compared to 35 percent).

- The PFL segment is **82 percent more likely to indicate that their dimensional mail format represents their brand very well** (51 percent compared to 28 percent). This is important because not all dimensional executions have the same impact. Part of the PFL value proposition is the design of high-impact, compelling dimensional mail pieces.

- The PFL segment is **32 percent more likely to report that direct mail produces moderate to major improvement in overall multichannel campaign performance** (65 percent compared to 49 percent). This outcome provides evidence that the PFL approach to the inclusion of direct mail in the channel mix is more effective.

*Figure 21* summarizes these comparison metrics.
The Bottom Line and Recommendations
The Bottom Line

Direct mail has the reputation of a low-tech channel that was once highly relevant but has been eclipsed by more modern digital channels. It’s an understandable assumption to make but it’s incorrect.

In our world, where much of what we receive is in a digital format, the tactile nature of direct mail can register in a way digital media cannot, and including tactile marketing approaches in multichannel campaigns makes them perform even better.

There are two extreme stances marketers often take concerning direct mail:

- Direct mail is dead and deserves no place in the modern marketer’s channel mix.
- Direct mail belongs in the channel mix for every audience and campaign.

The research this report provides clearly refutes the first stance. Whatever the emotions, experience, or opinions surrounding direct mail, the data here shows that including it in the mix for multichannel campaigns is a catalyst for better response rates and higher ROI.

The research also shares insights about the second stance. The data reveals that direct mail is not always ideal for the technical audience, but is optimal for the financial audience.

It’s also one of the best channels for the most sought-after audience in this study: The C-Suite.
Recommendations

1. Add direct mail to the mix.
Direct mail acts as a force multiplier to multichannel marketing programs, and it’s uniquely powerful to reach specific audiences, including the C-Suite, Finance, Sales & Marketing, and End Users.

2. Choose formats wisely.
The most popular and easiest to use direct mail format – the postcard – does the poorest job representing a brand. The adage, “any job doing is worth doing well” applies here: dimensional mail formats do the best job, by a significant margin, of representing the brand well and driving response and ROI performance.

3. Don’t let direct mail exist in a silo.
The study shows that a significant value and impact of direct mail comes from integrating it with the technology marketers use for multichannel campaigns. Integrating direct mail allows data-driven, triggered sends at optimal times for recipients, which improves response rates.

The assumption that direct mail is difficult or impossible to personalize is incorrect. The value of personalization applies as strongly to direct mail as it does to any digital format. Leverage the solutions or vendors that enable direct mail personalization.

Marketers are always looking for differentiation. Perhaps one of the best reasons to add direct mail to the channel mix is because other marketers have written it off and stopped using it. Those that do include it in the channel mix, and follow the best practices for format choice, integration, and personalization, will stand out from their competition.
Acknowledgements

Demand Metric is grateful to PFL for sponsoring this research, and for those who took the time to complete the study survey.

Demand Metric is a global research and advisory firm that supports marketing professionals with primary research and benchmark reports, technology research and advice, consulting services, training, and software.

Demand Metric’s core focus is to help B2B marketing organizations grow revenue by operationalizing the best practices discovered in our research.

To learn more about Demand Metric, sign up for a free membership at www.demandmetric.com

PFL is a leading provider of Tactile Marketing Automation solutions that help brands rise above the digital noise and be heard. With over 12,000 active customers, PFL provides sales enablement and marketing automation solutions, as well as printing, mailing and fulfillment services, that accelerate productivity and drive business forward.

The company is co-headquartered in Livingston, Montana and Indianapolis, Indiana. For more information, please visit www.pfl.com.
Appendix: Survey Background

This 2019 MultiChannel Campaign Benchmark Study survey was administered online during the period of June 18 through July 25, 2019. During this period, 603 responses were collected, 579 of which were qualified and complete enough for inclusion in the analysis. Only valid or correlated findings are shared in this report. The representativeness of this study’s results depends on the similarity of the sample to environments in which this survey data is used for comparison or guidance.

Summarized below is the basic categorization data collected about respondents to enable filtering and analysis of the data:

**TYPE OF BUSINESS/MARKET FOCUS:**
- 5% Non-profit
- 7% Agency/Consulting firm
- 10% Mostly B2B
- 27% Mixed B2B/B2C
- 51% Mostly B2B

**APPROXIMATE ANNUAL REVENUES:**
- 4% $500 to $999 million
- 11% $1 billion or more
- 17% $100 to $499 million
- 19% $25 to $99 million
- 17% $10 to $24 million
- 32% Less than $10 million
- 51% $1 billion or more

**PRIMARY ROLE OF RESPONDENT:**
- 5% IT
- 7% Operations
- 4% Other
- 11% CEO/President/Owner
- 1% Finance
- 8% Sales
- 64% Marketing

**REVENUE GROWTH ENVIRONMENT IN MOST RECENT FISCAL YEAR:**
- 3% Slight decrease
- 1% Significant decrease
- 14% Flat
- 28% Significant increase
- 54% Slight increase