

REFINE

Your Multichannel Message

THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN MERE CONSISTENCY

BY CAROL WORTHINGTON-LEVY



As the online channel has settled into the mainstream in recent years, multichannel integration has become more crucial for catalogers. Still, there are plenty of marketers out there who neglect, or simply fail, to maintain one voice and a cohesive visual treatment across the three key channels: catalog, Web and retail.

The sooner you determine a course of action that integrates your messaging across channels, the quicker you'll succeed. It's one thing to get the first sale. But you really want customers to come back to you again and again. And that's where the importance of multichannel recognition kicks in.

To make the leap into successful integration, one of the first steps is to recognize that not all media is good for all things. For example, consider that direct marketing print media, such as catalog, space advertising and direct mail is good for:

- customer acquisition and lead generation;
- romancing an offer;
- direct selling;
- increased "shelf life" (i.e., people keep catalogs);
- increased pass-along;
- dependable deliverability; and
- better perceived credibility and reliability.

It can be very expensive as a customer relationship tool in a business in which many changes need to be communicated, however. Also, unless you have a huge budget, space advertising can become a quagmire of costs with little return. Even with direct response space ads, measuring results is tricky and often deceiving.

Meanwhile, electronic media, such as Web and e-mail, is good for:

- cost-effectively maintaining relationships;
- communicating product or program changes;
- conveying urgency;
- encouraging dialogue; and
- dynamic personalization.

KEY MULTICHANNEL COORDINATION TIPS

The most successful integration between e-mail, Web sites and printed materials happens when the following takes place:

- ✓ branding rules are available and enforced;
- ✓ top priority is given to improving customer relationships and sales — not in getting awards for pretty designs;
- ✓ clear goals are set for sales and marketing, shared liberally with all vendors involved in providing creative and marketing services;
- ✓ guidelines, along with visual brand rules, regarding the voice of the copy are enforced across all channels; and
- ✓ Web sites and e-mails share with their catalog "sibling" all the direct marketing tools, including offers, guarantees and response drivers. — *CWL*

It's not very good at prospecting, since e-mail lists are weak compared to direct mail lists. So, when choosing which channels to use for parts of your campaign, don't try to make a medium do a job it's not good at doing.

Sometimes catalog owners or managers expect the vendors they farm projects out to will understand how to integrate their messaging. Nothing could be further from the truth. Virtually all vendors come from different backgrounds. Even within a full-service agency, cohesive branding throughout all the channels is daunting and often fails.

Brand, Your 'Trainer'

As for your brand, it needs to "train" people to recognize you as a company or product. And if done right, it becomes symbolic, and a reminder of your company's unique selling proposition. So it's more than just the logo and the palette of colors. And even those things aren't chosen randomly because of good looks, or the mood of the art director or designer.

That's one of the most devastating flaws in the thinking of many catalogers: They believe a graphic element or a color scheme can create a shift in their brand. It's in the sales messaging and the voice of offers, in addition to the choice of offers, and the look and feel.

Branding Supports Selling

If a brand is legitimate and useful, there's nothing in the brand rules that would make it hostile in direct mail or other response media. So there should be no rules that say your language must be overly subdued and *not* ask for response.

There also should be no rules demanding teeny type, light blue headlines, reversed out copy or missing toll-free numbers. The brand is

a support mechanism to help you sell. So if the branding isn't market-appropriate, it will interfere with your success in the market.

Organization, Easy Access

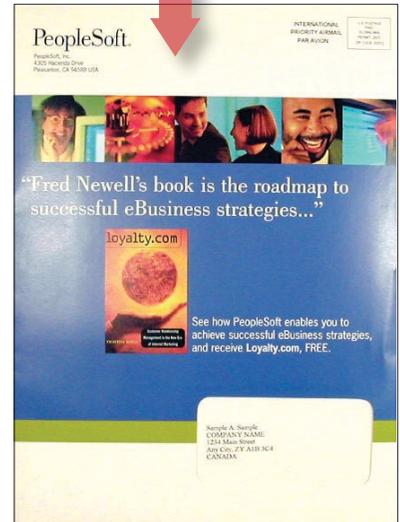
The catalogers that organize their brand standards and all the elements needed — and even examples of use — in an FTP site accessible to all vendors, communicate their brands the best. Many vendors, such as e-mail or Web programmers, have no marketing training, so they really don't understand how branding works. This is where many an integration strategy suffers from a general lack of experience.

So along with the FTP site, have an internal "brand policeman" — someone who knows your unique selling proposition, design and selling strategy intimately. That person can guide developers within your channels.

An example of a brand misinterpreted by a Web programmer: The brand standards at PeopleSoft were very clear. There was a Web site in which you could access CMYK and Pantone color schemes, many logo variations with rules on logo treatment, and even fonts and approved photos.

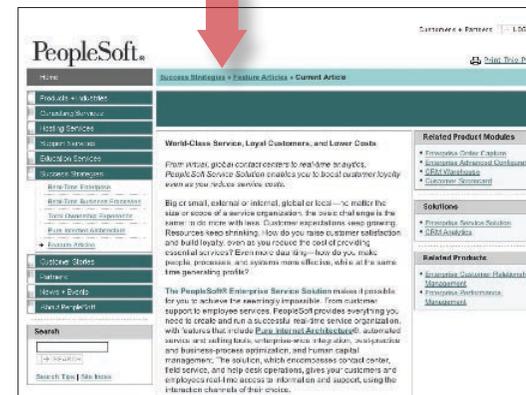


But when PeopleSoft attempted to translate the brand standards into direct mail, this is what came out:



Lead Generation

This lead-generation package was quite successful due to its market-appropriate offer and its friendly and approachable direction. That makes it look almost more "consumer" than business-to-business. However, when the Web programmers translated it from the same brand standards, this is what they came up with:



"Dull" would be an understatement. Ironically, the Web programmers did, in fact, use a few of the colors. They didn't see a mandate saying they had to use photos, and there was no guide for the voice of the copy.

MULTICHANNEL BRAND MANAGEMENT

Programmers don't take design classes for the most part; rather, they learn design on the job. And they almost never take classes in direct marketing creative.

Enter 'Brand Police'

Here's an example of why you need a "brand policeman" to guide the process, and why, if possible, the design team that does your direct marketing actually should be involved in the first layer of Web development.

Selling Strategy

Your selling strategy can show up almost as a subdivision of your brand. When trying to determine how to sell your product, make decisions that are supported and executed throughout your channels. A good example of this is seen in the current and ongoing Xerox color printer campaign. The direct mail uses verbiage that's inspiring and the design enhances the message by taking these keywords and making them shine.

Space advertising repeats the approach to the copy and the design.

Xerox's e-mail and Web are perfectly in sync with this approach. This is from a campaign created to draw customers in using a sweepstakes, and then to tease prospects into looking over a new color printer.

of time and money on, since it's a place customers and prospects willingly enter, rather than a "push" media, such as a print catalog. This has changed in a big way, though. Catalogers successfully are pushing prospects to Web sites. But if customers arrive at the sites and they don't bear brand resemblance and attitude



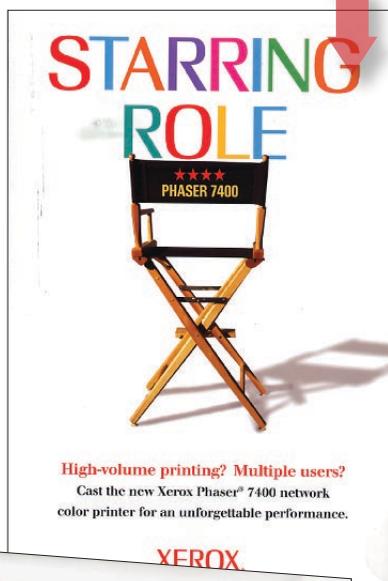
A landing page that's perfectly coordinated with the e-mail that drew me in.



to the catalogs, they're unlikely to feel at home.

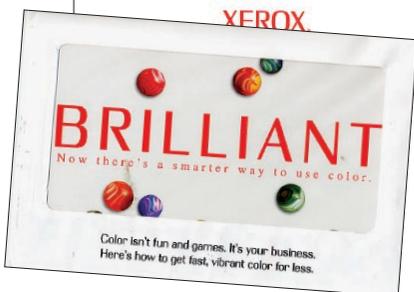
The Beau Ties catalog, which *Catalog Success* profiled in a "A Classic Act" (*November 2005*), does this right in many ways. The copy is warm and friendly and by the time you've spent just a few minutes with the catalog, you want to go out and buy a bow tie for every man on your shopping list.

Xerox's approach (left) to e-mail and Web are in sync.



Incorporating the Catalog

Many catalogs feel that the Web isn't worth spending a lot



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(continued from page 36)

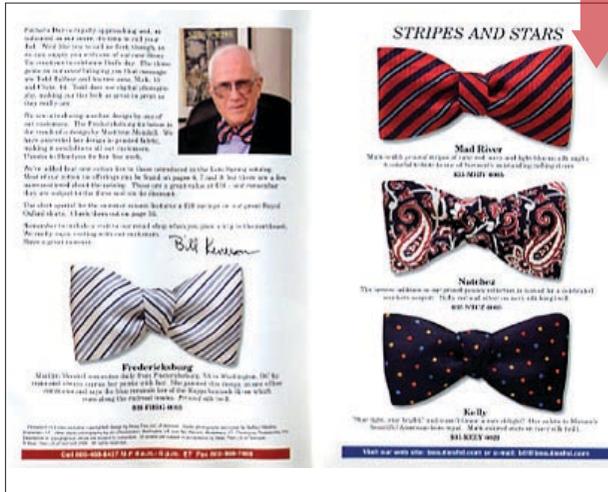
Beau Ties kicks off its relationship with small space ads in magazines like *New Yorker*:

A tiny ad, the bow tie centered at the top immediately says this is a friendly place to shop.

The company delivers on its promise when the catalog arrives, with its warm, engaging copy and straightforward approach. Images are big and colorful, and stories tell how

some of the patterns were developed.

That's the catalog. But the Web site is a whole other story. ▶



As warm and cuddly a company as Beau Ties is, all warm and fuzzies from its catalog go by the wayside on the company's Web site.

A VERY INTELLIGENT ADDITION

Don't waste expensive pages of selling space, use ...

THE BIND-IN ORDER FORM WITH OR WITHOUT AN ENVELOPE! CENTER FOLD HOT SPOT



- Proven, Consumer Oriented, User Friendly Paper
- Put the order form where it belongs, the center spread, the place your customers turn to.
- Organize the purchasing terms and conditions in one, customer friendly, easy-to-locate HOT SPOT.

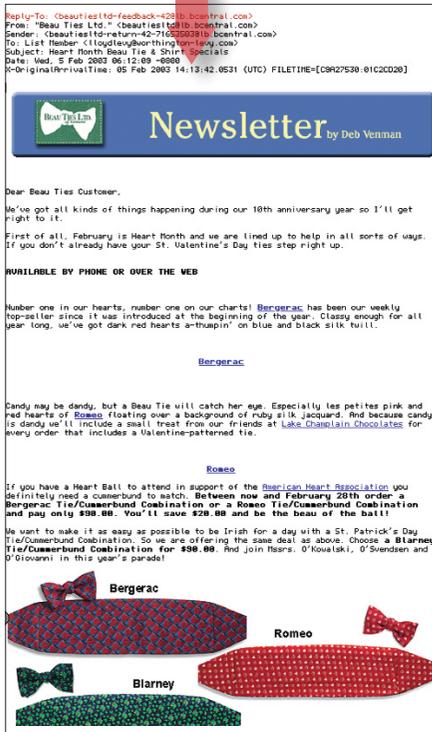
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www.bwpress.com

The site loses all the personality and warmth of the catalog. It fails to make consumers feel comfortable. I decided to sign up for Beau Ties' e-newsletter in the hopes that it would deliver on personality and warmth. I found it disappointing; the newsletter is difficult to read and doesn't deliver until past the fold.



The Good Life

A better example comes from Living the Spa Life, a startup catalog of pool and patio furniture and accessories, which shows that even a startup without extensive funding can be well integrated with just a little effort.

The cover of the catalog emphasizes relaxation in enjoying time on a deck or in a backyard. This is one of those rare catalog situations where it pays off to show the bliss and experience, rather than a pile of products.

The teasers on the cover do the heavy lifting to tell the recipient what type of products are inside.

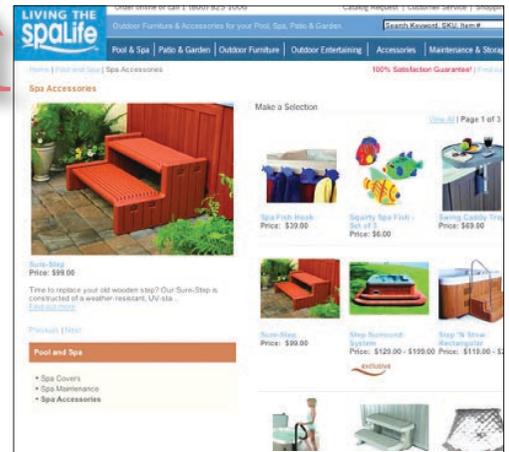


The bliss and experience of Living the Spa Life's products is fully communicated in both its catalog and Web site.

The Web site uses the same language and attitude, but it kicks off much more product-focused.

The site uses the same body copy as the catalog. So unlike many of the spa product sites, it romances customers rather than smacking them in the face with product.

Once viewers are romanced into the site, they're treated to a variety of products. But this still is done with good color, great organization and well-written copy.



Conclusion

While integration may seem like a slam dunk when you have the



logo and the elements, you can see from these examples that it's still a challenge.

It's not a tight budget that causes most integration failure, however. Instead, it's the misconception that all vendors understand how to incorporate creative that sells. But clearly, most don't. Keep this checklist close at hand when you're ready to integrate your catalog, direct mail, Web site, e-mails, e-newsletters, space advertising and more. A smooth brand across all channels will not only endear customers to you, it'll make them feel comfortable to spend, spend, spend. <<<

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