



A collaboration with:



November 2025

Direct Mail Inspiration from DELIVERED 2025

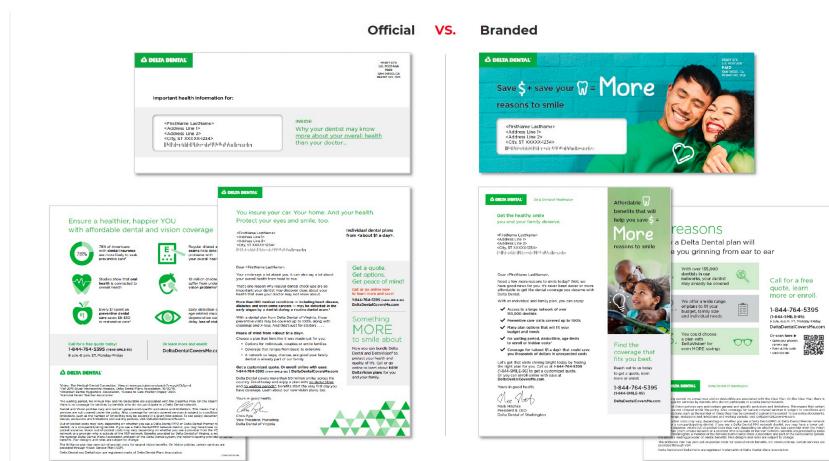
The third DELIVERED conference, an annual online event focused on direct mail marketing, was recently held, and one of the speakers presented an interesting perspective on the performance metrics of a few "official" and "branded" direct mail campaigns.

"Official" direct mail describes campaigns that appear to be from a business's accounting or customer service department. Some official mailings appear to have been sent by one of the levels of government, although that's a slippery slope. (It's illegal to impersonate government entities.)

On the other hand, "branded" campaigns are definitely marketing mailings.

Scott Hopkins, Chief Growth Officer of Anderson Direct & Digital, a San Diego-area agency, presented these three sets of campaigns.

Which performed better?



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DELTA DENTAL is a leading dental insurance business.

This customer acquisition campaign targets uninsured individuals.

As you can see, the branded campaign on the right includes much more imagery than its counterpart on the left. Says Scott, "Delta Dental, a couple of years ago, came up with a more lifestyle-oriented theme... and we had to pay homage to that."

Both use a single-page letter with additional information either on the reverse side or on a separate sheet. The official version mentions the claim "Individual dental plans from <about \$1 a

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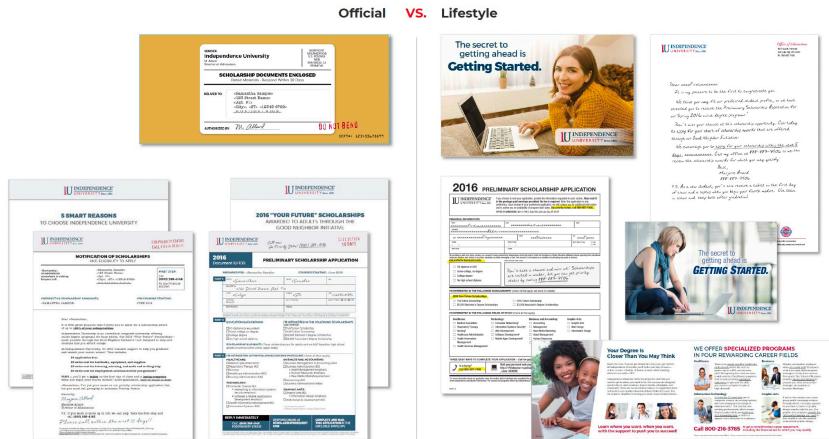
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day.>" twice in the letter, once in the upper right and a second time in the lettercopy. (Copy inside the < > is variable,)

The branded version only makes this claim once, in the lettercopy, which may have influenced the results. The offer is the same in both letters — a free customized quote.

CEHE (Center for Excellence in Higher Education) mailed these campaigns to potential millennial-age students.



Both campaigns provide the opportunity for potential students to apply for scholarships that cover up to 100% of college tuition at an online university.

While both packages include the same elements (a letter, pre-populated application form and supporting pieces), the official version is "very content heavy," according to Scott.

On the other hand, we "had a desire to connect with this millennial audience (using) lifestyle images and a 'handwritten' letter," he says.

(Anderson mailed these campaigns in 2016. Would the results be different today?)

Scott continues, "OPENDOOR is a fantastic direct mail client we got to work with for a number of years... direct mail is their main vehicle."

The company tested its packages constantly, and in this case, there's the control on the left and a totally new package on the right. In the control, the value proposition is clear:

Continues on the right

"Get an instant offer on your home."

In the new version, this idea is expanded by comparing their process to using a real estate agent.

OPENDOOR closes the deal in

two days, whereas the agent-led process takes much longer and requires more effort on the part of the seller. (However, one does wonder about the difference in selling price, net of fees.)

These three campaigns comprise a minimal sample set, which means that you should take these results with a massive grain of salt.

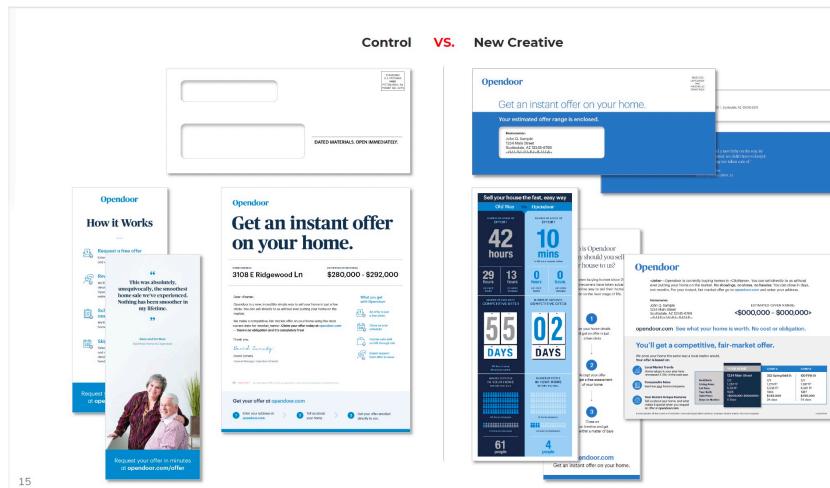
That said, the official version outperformed the branded/lifestyle version in two of the three cases. The differences were substantial:

Delta Dental got 52% more insurance clients from the official version.

CEHE achieved 32% more scholarship applications and, presumably, more revenue from those who applied for scholarships, received them, but had to top up their tuition account.

(The scholarship offer covered **up to** 100% of tuition, so only some would fully cover the tuition fee. Most would not.)

In the third campaign, for **OPENDOOR**, the new creative outperformed the control by 50%, which Scott says is "fantastic," noting that a lift of 15% to 20% is a more usual result for



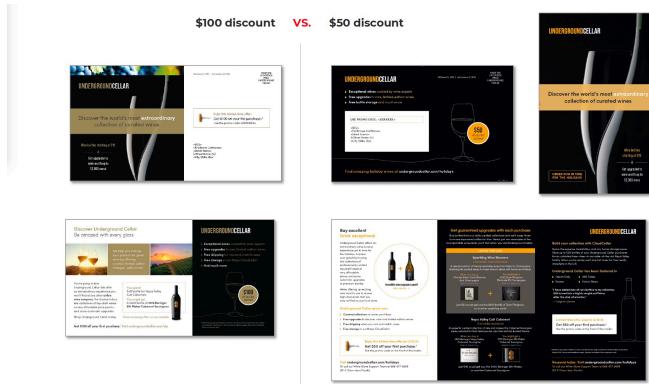
new creative tests.

However, they attributed this gain to a control that was becoming quite "fatigued."

We want to emphasize that these campaigns are acquisition

packages, and not promotions for existing customers.

In addition, Scott also discussed offer tests, including this case study, for an online wine club, **Underground Cellar**.



The campaign tested two offers — a \$50 or \$100 discount — for new club members.

Says Scott, "The mind-bending math here is that the \$100 offer provided an 83% lift in conversion rate, 25% lower customer acquisition cost (including the \$100 discount), and a 24% higher ROAS." The conclusion? Don't be afraid to test higher offers."

More coverage from DELIVERED:2025 appears on page 4.

16 TIPS ON HOW TO MAXIMIZE YOUR ROI

by Keith Goodman, V.P. Corporate Sales & Marketing, Modern Postcard

#1: Have a plan. The critical first step. Know what you want to accomplish, who you are going to target, and how you are going to stand out.

#2: Know the first step in your transaction process — and then focus on it. Common first steps: Come to my store; go to my website; attend a seminar; download an app; generate sales leads; generate referrals.

#3: There is no typical response rate! Ask yourself, *What response do I need?*

#4: Know how much money you can spend to obtain a customer. Ten percent of gross profit over a 3-year period is a guide.

#5: Focus on the cost per new customer; this is your key KPI. Don't become distracted by other metrics, like the cost per piece or the response rate.

#6: Understand your market. Know precisely who you are targeting, and their interests.

#7: Have a budget. Get the best program you can for the budget you have to spend

#8: Profile your customer list. When you understand your customers better, your prospecting becomes easier.

#9: Your best prospects will look like your best customers. See #8.

#10: Use new movers, new homeowners and pre-movers files. These people spend!

#11: Use imagery to attract attention. People are overwhelmed with marketing messages. You must rise above the noise!

#12: Don't stop sending emails. Combine email blasts with direct mail drop dates.

#13: Match digital ads to postal. Extend your direct mail campaign through targeted digital advertising.

#14: Use postal retargeting. More productive than email follow-up.

#15: Test, test, test! Test formats, lists, offers, images.

#16: Track results. The best way is match-back analysis; a holdout group lets you know the incremental lift of your campaigns.

MEMBERS-ONLY LIVE DIRECT MAIL INSIDERS' CALLS ON ZOOM

(All 90-minute calls start at NOON Eastern/11 AM Central/9 AM Pacific)

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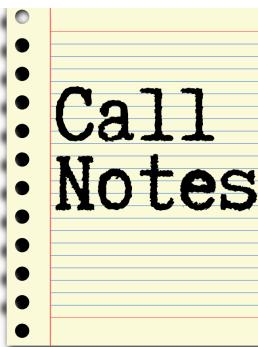
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FULL Members

November 25th

January 27th

These calls will be recorded and posted on the Private Members' Site for future reference.



Our October 14th call discussed three "Grand Controls" from Who's Mailing What! looking for inspiration from these long-running campaigns. (A Grand Control has been mailed repeatedly over 3+ years.)

The three campaigns were: A customer mailing from Discover Financial, a lead gen mailing from TXU Energy, and a donor acquisition pitch from American Rivers.

While we had a wide-ranging discussion (check the replay), here are three insights.

1. Direct mail letters are getting shorter.

In the early 2000s, the direct mail packages averaged 961 words; today, it's less than 700. (The promotions we reviewed were 1,277, 839, and 2,475 words respectively.)

Morgan DiGiorgio of WMW! says this only makes sense: "In my professional opinion, fewer words get more attention. It works that way in digital." A related trend is the growing use of icons in direct mail letters as shown by this example from TXU Energy.

2. A QR Code on the outer envelope

The American Rivers promotion presents its offer — two gifts with your minimum \$27 donation — on the outer envelope (see image in the next column).

But it added a QR code to the envelope so people could donate without even opening the envelope. (The QR code is contained within



the red box.)

The copy to the right of the QR code reads, "To put your membership to work even faster to save America's Rivers, scan here or go to AmericanRivers.org/unDam."

The question we could not answer, since the QR codes have been redacted, is: *Are the two QR codes different?*

They should be, if only to learn if anyone is using the QR on the envelope.

3. Tell the truth. It's too easy to check the facts!

Page four of the American Rivers letter, reads in part, "American Rivers is a **small** non-profit organization struggling to..."

"Small" is the kid with the lemonade stand, or neighbors gathered in a kitchen to bake a pile of cookies for the local community fundraiser.

American Rivers is neither "small" nor "struggling."

On its website, the organization claims 355,000 members, 14 corporate sponsors, and at least 97 employees. According to guidestar.com, in 2024, the organization had \$35.6 million in revenue (\$19.6 million from contributions and \$16 million from government grants).

They should look for a different adjective; **dedicated**, perhaps?

Mailing of the Month:

Baldwin Brothers Funeral & Cremation Society

Ft. Myers, FL

About Baldwin Brothers Funeral & Cremation Society

The Baldwin family has been in the end-of-life business for three generations in Florida.

In 1973, Richard and James Baldwin (and outside investors) started Baldwin-Fairchild Funeral Homes & Cemeteries in Orlando, which grew to nine funeral homes and one cemetery, before being sold in 1983.

In 2013, Richard Baldwin was on the ground floor of a new business, Baldwin Brothers Funeral & Cremation Society in Ft. Myers, which offered a simpler, easier, and cheaper way to arrange end-of-life services. This business grew from a single chapel to 22 locations throughout Florida.

In 2021, Baldwin Brothers Funeral & Cremation Society was sold to Foundation Partners, a Winter Park, Florida-based operator of funeral homes and crematories in 27 US states.

About This Campaign

This is a long-running acquisition campaign for pre-arranged funeral services.

Comments on this Campaign



We talk a lot about consistency in your successful mail campaigns, and these postcards from Baldwin Brothers prove the validity of this point.

The image at the left is from a mailing this year, while the second image is from 2020.

Look at the similarities:

- The main image is essentially the same (two generations in a single photo) and it is in the same position on both postcards.
- The price comparison between Baldwin Brothers and some local competitors for basic cremation is also in the same position, although it is more dominant in the 2020 card, perhaps because of the price differences. (The 2020 graphic looks like a bar graph, while the 2025 graphic looks like headstones. Subconscious thinking by the designer?)
- The corporate branding is the same, although it is somewhat larger in the 2020 postcard.





- The offer is the same, namely an "Educational Seminar and Free Lunch."

It's important to note that the locations are well-known, branded restaurants, as Baldwin Brothers' reputation attaches to the venues. *Joe's Greasy Spoon* might have better food and lower prices, but does it align with the company's reputation?

Notice also that each postcard offers six seminar dates, so that interested people have a choice of both dates and restaurant. This approach may have been by accident or design, but these options will almost certainly increase response.

We spoke with David Kopp and he kindly provided some important details about these "Lunch and Learn" events.

- The seminars start at different times, from 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM, or at 2:30 PM. The restaurants prefer that these seminars occur before or after the

lunch rush. By working within these parameters, the company probably gets a better deal. For example, the company budgets \$20 to \$25 for each lunch served, and pays \$0 facility fee.

- These seminars are about 40 minutes long, followed by lunch which is a choice of three to five pre-selected menu items. Beverages are not included in the free lunch package and alcoholic beverages are absolutely not included.

- While attendance varies from one event to another, one of his typical seminars comprises four couples (usually husband and wife) and a "very high percentage" of attendees purchase.

- Critically, the invitation is for "first-time attendees" and they are tracked by their telephone number. While this process does not guarantee that all attendees are "first-timers," it does limit intentional, multiple visits. Also, since most attendees purchase one of the company's products at the seminar, why would they be interested in hearing the same pitch a second time?

Baldwin Brothers have conducted these Lunch and Learn seminars since 2013, which means they are, almost certainly, a profitable marketing initiative for the company.

(See a related article, Prepping A Mailing List, on page 11.)

This mailing's stats from Who's Mailing What!

Left: WMW's "score" for this campaign (0 to 100)

Center: This campaign's most recent mailing date

Right: One star indicates a "control mailing; 3 stars, a "grand control."



Images courtesy of Who's Mailing What!

Beyond The Mailbox

Why So Much Marketing Doesn't Work (And How a Better Offer Can Fix it)

by David Baer

I spend the majority of my time as a Revenue Growth Strategist to businesses. Most business owners I talk to worry about their marketing. They tweak their logo, try new colors, and rewrite their headlines. They print flyers, send postcards, or run ads online. But most of these efforts don't move the needle. The phone remains quiet. The inbox stays empty.

If this sounds familiar, you're not alone. You might start to wonder if marketing just doesn't work for people like you.

But here's what I've learned after helping many businesses: the problem usually isn't your design or your copy. It's your offer.

Why the Offer Matters Most

When someone gets your mail or sees your ad, they immediately ask themselves, *"Is this worth my time? Should I do something about this right now?"* If you don't give them a clear, strong reason to act, most people just move on.

Many marketers focus on looking professional or clever. But a good offer is about making it easy and safe for people to take the next step.

This isn't a new concept. Marketers have used strong offers for decades. **Claude Hopkins**, who wrote about advertising over 100 years ago, was clear about this point: "Advertising is salesmanship." You have to give people a reason to act.

Modern marketers, such as **Todd Brown** and **Alex Hormozi**, say the same thing. Hormozi

calls this the "value equation." If what you're offering feels more valuable than what it costs, people will say yes. If it doesn't, they won't.

What Makes an Offer Work?

Here are four components of a strong offer.

Clarity: People shouldn't have to guess what you're offering. If your offer takes effort to understand, people will just skip it. "Get a free roof inspection this week. Call to schedule." That's clear. "Contact us to learn more about our services," is not.

Perceived Value: People care about value, not just price. *Is what you're offering worth more than what you're asking for in return?* And before you think it's always about money, remember that people also value things like time, effort, and trust - sometimes even more than money.

For years, book clubs advertised "12 books for \$1." That felt like a win for the customer. It's the same today with things like "first month free" or "bonus with purchase."

Risk Reversal: People are careful with their money. They don't want to make a mistake. If you remove the risk, more people will act. Todd Brown says, "If you want more sales, take away their fear." That's why money-back guarantees and free trials work so well.

Urgency and Scarcity: Even a strong offer gets ignored if people think they can take it anytime. Deadlines and limited spots push people to act now. "This offer ends Friday.

Continues on the right

Only 10 spots left." These work not because they're tricks, but because people need a reason to act today, not someday.

How to Build a Better Offer

Let's break it down in plain steps, which requires you to be clear, generous, and make it easy for people to respond.

1. Decide what you want people to do.

Make the next step as simple as possible. If you want calls, say so. If you want people to visit, make sure they know where and when.

2. Make it valuable.

What can you add that costs you little but feels big to them? A free consultation. A bonus item. A free report. A first-time discount. The goal is to make the "yes" feel easy.

3. Remove the risk.

Can you offer a guarantee? A free trial? Can you let people try before they commit? The more you can take the fear away, the better.

4. Add a reason to act now.

Give a deadline. Limit the spots. Tie it to a holiday or event. Be honest — don't make up fake scarcity — but give a real reason to respond soon.

5. Make responding easy.

Don't make people jump through hoops. Use a simple phone number, website, or reply card. The fewer steps, the better.

What Offers Might Look Like

Let's look at some example offers that follow these rules:

Free Trial Offers: Gyms, magazines, and software companies use these all the time. "Try free for 7 days." You get to see the value before

you pay. It feels safe.

Value Stack: Bonus items have long been part of great offers. In recent years they've been discussed in terms of "stacking value." For example, a managed IT service provider might offer: "Sign up for our monthly support plan and get a free cybersecurity audit, 24/7 help desk access, and your first month free. If you're not satisfied in the first 60 days, you can cancel with no penalty." This stacks the main service, a valuable audit, round-the-clock support, a free trial, and a risk-free cancellation — making it an easy decision for the prospect.

Risk Reversal: A home contractor says, "If we're late finishing your remodel, we pay you \$500 for every day we run over." This turns a common fear into a selling point.

Urgency: A dentist sends a postcard: "Free whitening for the first 10 new patients this month. Call today." There's a clear reason to respond now.

Low Barrier Entry: A financial advisor offers, "a 15-minute retirement check-up. No sales pitch, no obligation." This lowers the commitment and builds trust.

Why Most Offers Fall Flat

Most marketing fails because the offer is too vague, too risky, or seems like it involves too much work. "Contact us for more information" isn't an offer. It's an invitation with no clear reward attached to it.

Another mistake is asking for too much, too soon. If your first step is "Book a two-hour consultation," most people will skip it. Start smaller. Offer a quick call. A free guide. Something easy.

No urgency is another problem. If there's no reason to act now, most people won't.

Continues on page 10

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And finally, if your offer still feels risky — if people worry they'll waste time or money — they'll stay away. Make your offer feel safe.

How to Test and Improve Your Offer

Even if you think your offer is great, you won't know until you test it. The best marketers, from the old days to now, test different offers and tweak them based on what works.

If you send two versions of your direct mail — one offering a free estimate, another offering \$50 off the first service — see which one gets more calls. Track which postcards or ads get responses. Use different codes, phone numbers, or web addresses to tell them apart.

If you get little or no response, ask yourself: *Is the offer clear? Is it valuable? Is there risk for the customer? Is there a reason to act now?* Adjust the offer until you find what people respond to.

It helps to study what others in your field are offering. Collect examples, see what works, and adapt those ideas for your own business.

What Makes a Good Offer in Real Life?

When you look at real businesses, the most effective offers are clear, easy to understand, and give people a reason to act now. Here are three documented examples that show how strong offers work in practice.

Personalized Postcards with Special Offers

About a decade ago, a restaurant opened a few blocks from my home. To announce their upcoming opening, they sent out personalized postcards to homes within easy walking distance. Each postcard included a special "pre-opening" offer (a free chicken dinner to pick up and take home). They also included a unique coupon code on each postcard to track the orders. About two weeks after redeeming

our coupon, the restaurant opened their dining room to packed crowds and a waiting list. A simple, targeted offer had a big impact on both immediate sales and a decade-long run.

Buy 3, Get 3 Free

Bath & Body Works runs an annual Black Friday promotion: "Buy 3, Get 3 Free" on almost everything in the store. This simple, generous offer encourages people to buy in multiples and stock up for gifts. It's consistently one of the brand's highest-grossing sales events, driving both high sales volume and larger average orders. The clarity and perceived value of the offer make it a customer favorite.

BOGO for Vaccinated Customers

In 2021, Chipotle launched a one-day "Buy One, Get One Free" tied to supporting a national vaccination push. The offer was for customers who mentioned a special phrase after 3 p.m. The goal was to drive traffic during slow hours and support the national vaccination campaign. Chipotle's offer increased store visits and generated positive press, showing how a timely, relevant offer can boost both sales and brand reputation.

If your marketing isn't working, examine your offer first. Ask: *Is it clear? Is it valuable? Is it risk-free or close to it? Is there a reason to act now? Is it easy to respond?*

You don't need a big budget to make a better offer. Just give people a real reason to say yes — and make it easy for them to do it.

The best marketers, from years past to today, agree on this point. If your offer is right, everything else gets easier. If your offer is weak, nothing else will save it.

Give people a clear, valuable, low-risk reason to respond now — and watch what happens.

Prepping A Mailing List



This month's mailing discusses a long-running campaign from Baldwin Brothers Funeral and Cremation Society.

This article reviews the process for developing and refining the list for this campaign.

1. Define your niche

Baldwin Brothers will know its niche precisely from the hundreds of past buyers of its pre-planned funeral services.

However, if you don't have such insights, a quick Google search or an AI question will provide the answer. In this case, Floridians in their "50s and 60s" are the best prospects.

Accordingly, we plan to rent the names of residents in certain Florida cities who are aged 55 to 65 and who have a minimum household income of \$50,000 per year.

Our go-to list broker, **Peter Lachnicht** of Caldwell List Co., tells us that 5,000 names rent for \$375 (or 7.5 cents per name).

We can refine list rental orders based on demographic (such as income and marital status) and lifestyle metrics. Unfortunately, in this case, consumer interest in a pre-planned funeral product is not selectable.

If the 5,000 names cover five different cities, that's approximately 1,000 names per city.

2. Check the list

Examine the list and eliminate any duplicates, records with incomplete addresses, and those that do not match your specifications. If you're only renting from one list, these issues

should not be a problem, but it's always best to check.

If you're renting two or more different lists, you will almost always find duplicates.

3. Refine the list

Next, add focused names from your housefile, including, in this case, people who have inquired about pre-planning services (but not purchased) and those who registered for a recent seminar but did not attend.

Similarly, suppress the names of past purchasers and seminar attendees.

4. Decide on a test

Are you going to test this campaign, or, like Baldwin Brothers, mail all at once (based on the long-running success of this campaign)?

If testing, choose a simple "nth name" selection for the test, i.e., "every 10th name".

In closing, **Stephanie Figueroa** of Selby Marketing estimates that the cost to produce this mailing for one city (1,000 pieces) would be \$1,020, or \$1,095 including the list rental.

Four people responding to each event would yield eight attendees per event.

If 50% of these attendees purchased the least expensive service, that's \$5,372 in revenue per event, from a total cost of \$1,295 (including list rental, mailing costs, and lunch).

That's 24% of sales, which must align with Baldwin Brothers' expectations; otherwise, they would not have continued these Lunch and Learn events for the past decade.

(Our estimates may be conservative.)



SEND-OFF

REVERSE-ENGINEERING FAILURE: LEARNING MORE FROM WHAT DOESN'T WORK

Failure isn't just inevitable — it's a valuable source of insight. While success stories may become legendary, the lessons learned from failure can be even more impactful. Here's how to learn more from "failures."

1. Analyze the Root Cause

Failures don't happen randomly; they stem from specific causes. Whether a flawed process, miscommunication, or misaligned expectations, tracing the issue back to its source is the first step. Break down the sequence of events and identify where things went off track. Understanding the root cause lets you make targeted changes that prevent repeat mistakes.

Tip: Use tools like the "5 Whys" technique, asking "Why?" multiple times until you reach the core issue. This approach keeps the analysis focused and avoids superficial conclusions.

2. Look for Patterns

One isolated failure may not be significant, but recurring issues signal deeper problems. Keep a record of failures and look for trends over time. Are deadlines consistently missed? Which projects are prone to setbacks? Patterns provide a roadmap for addressing weaknesses.

Example: If client complaints center around unclear deliverables, this indicates that your communication processes need to be refined.

3. Turn Insights Into Action

The value of understanding failure lies in applying what you've learned. Use the insights

gained to implement changes in your processes, training, or strategy. Set measurable goals for improvement and track the results over time to ensure your adjustments are effective.

Common Pitfall to Avoid: Overreacting to failure can lead to rushed decisions or abandoning strategies prematurely. Instead, take calculated steps to improve, ensuring they align with your broader objectives.

4. Foster a Culture of Openness

Team members fear failure because of the stigma attached to it. Create an environment where failures are openly discussed and analyzed leads to continuous improvement. Highlight lessons learned, not errors made.

Key Idea: Don't assign blame. Instead, identify what went wrong and fix it collaboratively.

5. Balance Risk and Innovation

Failures often come from trying something new, which is essential for growth. Please don't shy away from calculated risks, but ensure they're backed by proper planning and safeguards. Reverse engineering failures from past experiments can inform better decision-making in future endeavors.

Practical Step: Use pilot programs or prototypes to test new ideas on a smaller scale before fully committing resources.

Final Thought

Failure, when approached constructively, is one of the most powerful learning tools available. By reverse engineering what doesn't work, you not only fix current issues but also build a foundation for smarter decisions in the future.

The key is to treat every misstep as an opportunity to refine your approach and move closer to long-term success.