



Dear *Direct Mail Insiders* Client,

These days, it's not often to find useful, well-written content about direct mail delivered the "old-fashioned" way... printed on real paper! To me, this is what embodies the uniqueness of the *Direct Mail Insiders* monthly report.

There is value in direct mail. There is innovation in direct mail. There is money to be made in direct mail, and this monthly publication is on point with its direct mail-specific and complementary articles about business strategy.

It is an honor to partner with *Direct Mail Insiders* and use our marketing and technology prowess to help disseminate this information to those it can help the most — direct mail advertisers and marketers.

We are proud to make this monthly report available to our community as part of a collaboration with *Direct Mail Insiders* and Who's Mailing What!

Please continue to enjoy your personal copy of the *Direct Mail Insiders* monthly report, now with even more great content from Who's Mailing What!

Sincerely,

Brad Kugler  
CEO  
Who's Mailing What!



A collaboration with:



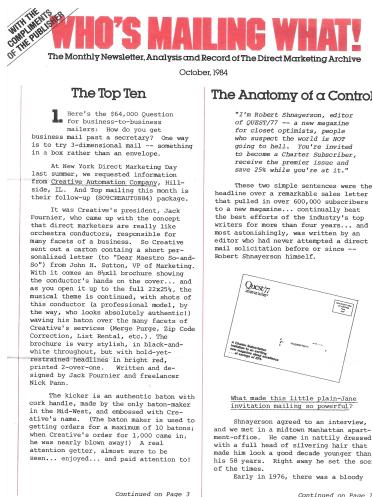
September 2025

## If You Are Just Joining Us...

by David Foley

Welcome to the *Direct Mail Insiders* monthly report, and to our collaboration with DirectMail2.0 and Who's Mailing What!

First, a bit of history.



The cover of the first issue of the Who's Mailing What! newsletter.

Image courtesy of Paull Bobnak

today's world.

Since its inception, WMW! has been integral to *Direct Mail Insiders*, by providing source material and data for our content. But it's not a one-sided relationship, because the team at DirectMail2.0

and WMW! has also been a recipient and consumer of our reports since we launched.

And now that relationship is taking a new form, with the distribution of a digital version of this report to DirectMail2.0/WMW! email subscribers.

Our new digital subscribers will soon discover

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**"If You Are Just Joining Us..."**



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**"If You Are Just Joining Us..."**  
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that we are proud advocates of the direct mail medium. Inside the pages of our monthly report, you will find...

Cover stories that focus on direct mail tactics and opportunities, direct mail news, and interviews with people deeply involved with direct mail today.

A "Mailing of the Month" feature that highlights and comments on a mailing from the Who's Mailing What! library. This feature always appears on pages six and seven.

And, of course, there are other direct mail-related articles, from one-offs to multi-issue columns on a single subject.

Then, we complement this content with additional material for entrepreneurs and business owners, specifically...

David Baer's column, Beyond the Mailbox, offers practical marketing advice that every business can use. This column always begins on page eight.

Similarly, SEND-OFF (on page 12) explores subjects related to business strategy.

In essence, each issue of the *Direct Mail Insiders* monthly report blends the art and science of direct mail with insightful stories on sales, marketing and business strategy.

I am not naive. Direct mail volumes will never return to those of its heyday.

But, there is a meaningful role for physical mail in today's world, because of its unique ability to cut through digital noise (which can be deafening), deliver superior engagement and response rates, foster trust and memorability, and leverage innovative integrations with digital channels.

Sit in a comfortable chair and get lost in a mailing that landed in your mailbox: feel the paper, examine all the "stuff" inside the envelope, skim the letter. Or, flip through a catalog, perhaps marking items of interest as you go. Or, check out the meal deals from a local fast food restaurant.

I sincerely hope you enjoy your direct mail journey with us.

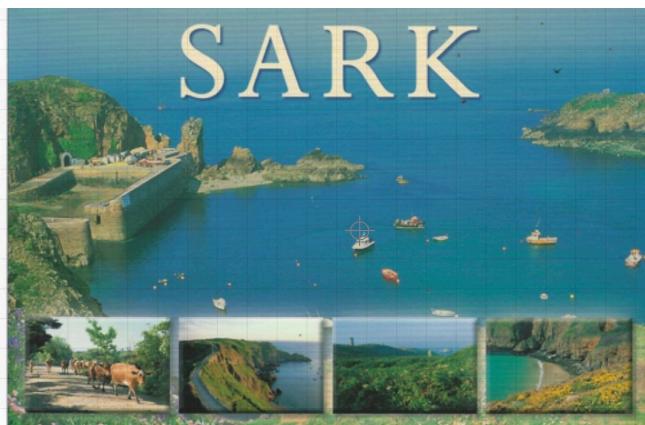
# **A million dollars in revenue — from postcards!**

Handwritten, touristy cards with real stamps, mailed a few at a time.



Ask **Nick Wrathall**, a veteran direct response marketer in the UK, how to increase sales, and he will tell you to "mail postcards."

Not postcard mailings, but handwritten, tourist-like postcards sent from unusual places. Like the tiny island of Sark, the "crown jewel of the Channel Islands," which is a dependency of the British Crown since becoming attached during the Norman Conquest of 1066.



While on the island, Nick wrote and mailed 10 postcards: one to his mother, eight to customers and acquaintances, and one to a person he wanted to connect with.

The text began something like this:

*Greetings from Sark, a tiny island with no cars and no roads, but with lots going on, including... (an item of interest to the recipient)*

Nick says, "I've been mailing postcards like this for 20 years and they work because they are genuine personal messages which almost always get past the gatekeepers (even those

nosey enough to read the message on the card)."

Case in point: The CEO of the company Nick wrote to responded with a message that read, in part, "let's have lunch on your island or mine." (The CEO's home is in Guernsey, another of the Channel Islands.)

In mailing to prospects, Nick says it's critical to do your research in advance, to find that one line — the "zinger" he calls it — that will resonate with the recipients.

Nick calls this research his "sales detective" mode; "Five minutes on the Internet is all you need," he says.

To prove his point, Nick revealed things about me during our Zoom conversation, which made it clear he had researched my name.

Nick knew where I was born (Manchester), my childhood home in the UK (Matlock), and my wife's retail business (Bloor West Winery), and those are only the things he mentioned!

(If Nick sent me a postcard, with an image of Manchester or Matlock, it would resonate with me just as much as one from Sark.)

Postcard mailings to existing customers can be "chatty catch-up" messages, while those to lapsed customers will include an incentive: *"Include this card with your next order and save 15%"*

In the early days of this journey, Nick calculated that the initial extra revenue generated was £23.00 (or US\$30.90) per mailed postcard. Over time, the additional revenue grew to over one million dollars, Nick says.

***Continued on page 4  
"Postcards"***

## "Postcards"

### **Continued from page 3**

In addition to handwritten, individual cards, postcards have many other applications.

Nick gave three examples:

At **trade shows**, print your offer on a postcard. It's visually more interesting and, by definition, a different size and shape from almost everything else one picks up at a show.

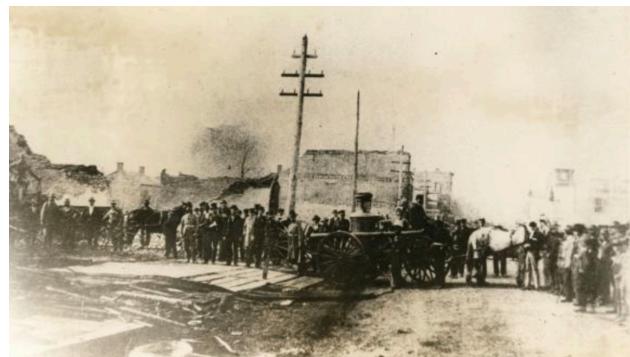
When seeking to connect with someone at a **conference**, write your message on a postcard. "Everyone else uses a business card or the note paper that the venue provides," Nick points out.

As a **follow-up to a business meeting**, send a postcard in addition to the standard thank-you email. Handwrite the message, perhaps beginning with: *"At our meeting, I forgot to mention that..."*

Nick also sees a role for handwritten postcards in mailings to promote products or services.

For instance, if selling a fire safety assessment to businesses, use a postcard that contains the image of the great fire that nearly destroyed the city and mail to recipients there.

Every city has experienced a great fire at some point in its history, and photographs can be found in the city's archives or elsewhere. Most images will be in the public domain.



The Great Fire of Windsor, Ontario, October 12-13, 1871, destroyed over 100 buildings in the downtown core.

Photo credit: Walkerville Times Collection

Print the image on one side of the postcard and the vertical center line on the other, and presto, you have a relevant image for your message and an inexpensive way to deliver it.

In closing, here are Nick's quick "insider" tips for handwritten postcard mailings.

1. Affix the stamp first — before writing anything; use self-adhesive stamps. This ensures that the stamp does not cover any part of your message
2. Always write the name and address of the recipient and let it dry "before penning your words of wealth creation."
3. Whenever possible, buy "touristy" postcards and mail from that location. Send as airmail.

For more postcard marketing wisdom, contact Nick at **[nick@insideinvestorclub.com](mailto:nick@insideinvestorclub.com)**.

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## MEMBERS-ONLY LIVE DIRECT MAIL INSIDERS' CALLS ON ZOOM

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

ALL Members

**September 9th**

**October 14th**

**November 11th**

FULL Members

**September 25th**

**October 28th**

**November 25th**

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

# Call Notes

Our call on August 11th offered a deep dive into the world of benefits, using four postcard campaigns from vendors in the weight loss category as examples.

The call discussed the three levels of benefits:

Functional, Dimensional(ized), and Emotional. Marketers should always strive for the latter, since people often buy based on how they feel about a particular product or service.

Of the four campaigns studied, only one, from Options Medical Weight Loss, expressed its benefit on an emotional level. Here is its postcard.



As you can see, Options presented its weight loss service as a "transformation," which means (according to Google) "a thorough or dramatic change in form or appearance." Isn't that

precisely why people want to lose weight?

One side of the card reads "Your **Transformation** starts this Summer," establishing the expectation of relatively quick results. (WMW! received this mailing in May.) The message on the other side of the card reads "*Your Transformation Awaits!*" which implies (at the very least) that all one needs to do is call or scan the QR code to become transformed.

It is interesting to note that Options uses "GLP-1 injections" (think Ozempic) which may "jump start" weight loss process.)

Options' call to action was a well-designed web form which listed all the benefits of its program before asking potential clients to complete and submit the form.

Members who are interested in the whole discussion can check the replay.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Nick Wrathall**, whose interview starts on page three, mailed me a postcard saying, "I thought I'd send you a photograph of your



future UK offices." Of course, it's tongue-in-cheek, but it's a fun message worth sharing.

How many others will see the postcard? How many others will hear the story? Hundreds of people may read this piece and the interview, which can start the sharing process. -- DF

**Mailing of the Month:**  
**United Service Organizations, Inc.**  
**Washington, DC**

### **About United Service Organizations (USO)**

As its name implies, the USO brought together several charitable organizations into a single entity which would "lift the morale of (its) military and nourish support on the home front." For many, Bob Hope's tours (which ran from 1941 to 1990) are synonymous with the USO, although entertainment continues as a big part of the USO's outreach today.

The USO is not a federal government agency; it relies on donations from individuals and corporations to fulfill its mission. In 2024, its direct response campaigns achieved \$56 million in unrestricted donations or about 22.7% of the organization's income for the year.

### **About This Campaign**

This campaign is a donor acquisition mailing.

### **Comments on this Campaign**



gifts for all who choose to use them. Fundraising 101!

And, the back of the envelope reveals a choice of gifts that donors may receive. We'd quibble a bit with the headline: "Choose your FREE GIFT when you show your support for our heroes" is more accurate than the current headline since it ties the gift to a donation, which is required to receive a gift. (Technically, these gifts are not "free.")

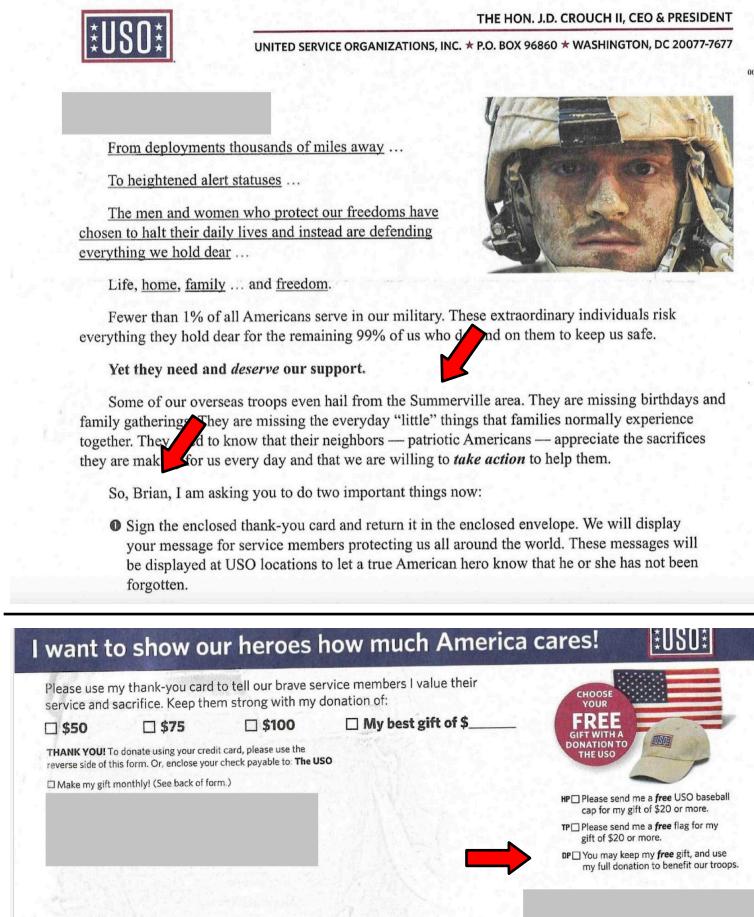
Notice the bottom left-hand corner: "THIS MAILING IS PRODUCED IN THE USA." This may be national pride on display. But, it begs the question, *Where else would it be produced?*

The first thing that puzzled us about this mailing was the low score (8) it received from Who's Mailing What!, particularly since this is a "grand control," meaning it has been received repeatedly by WMW! over the past three years.

How can both facts be true at the same time? Most mailers do not remail packages that are not successful.

The outer envelope doesn't miss a trick.

The front of the envelope includes two windows (highlighted), and behind the left window, recipients would likely see their personalized name and address labels (mentioned in the lettercopy). These are



The letter's opening is quite strong...

from the photograph of the soldier...

to the first sentence, broken into three sections...

to the factoid ("Fewer than 1% of all Americans serve in our military...")...

and to the personalization woven into the lettercopy. (We've indicated these with arrows; the first is the city/town where the recipient lives; the second is the recipient's first name.)

Like most fundraising letters, this one incorporates a personalized response form at the bottom of page one (and pitches monthly donations on the reverse side).

Appropriately enough, the response form shows the "free gift" options and asks respondents to check one of three boxes. The third option (indicated by the arrow) reads: "You may keep my **free** gift, and use my full donation to benefit our troops."

reads: "You may keep my **free** gift, and use my full donation to benefit our troops."

This nice touch is definitely in the USO's interest since it saves the cost of fulfilling the gift offer.

This mailing includes two other items that we cannot show due to space limitations. One is a lift note that promotes the free gift offer; the second is a "thank you" card that donors can sign and send to the USO, which promises that "your message of support will be scanned and digitally displayed at USO locations worldwide."

In summary, this mailing gives recipients many choices: They can donate once or monthly, choose a gift with a minimum \$20 donation or waive it, and send a supportive message to American troops wherever they may be deployed. This is a solid package.

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

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

Centre: 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

## How Often Should You Email Your Customers?

(The Real Answer is More Nuanced Than You Think.)

by David Baer

Several years ago, I worked with a local winery owner who was terrified of “bothering” her customers. She sent one email a month — sometimes fewer. Her open rates were high, but sales were flat.

I convinced her to experiment with sending more frequently: a short weekly tip, plus a monthly offer. Within 3 months, her revenue from email doubled. But not everyone was happy. A handful of subscribers complained about “too many emails” and unsubscribed.

This is the tightrope every small business walks: email too little and people forget you. Sending too many emails can annoy your best customers.

So, what’s the correct answer? The research shows it’s not about finding a magic number — it’s about matching your message and frequency to your audience’s needs and your relationship with them.

### **There's No One-Size-Fits-All Frequency — And That's Backed by Data**

Let’s start with the numbers. A 2017 study in the *Journal of Marketing Research* looked at millions of emails from a major retailer. The researchers found that the “right” frequency depends on the customer’s relationship with your brand and their buying intent.

Here’s what they discovered:

Best customers (loyal, recent buyers): 5-7 emails per month led to the highest purchase rates.

More than that, sales dropped. For these customers, too many emails felt like spam and reduced their likelihood to buy, from 47% with no emails to just 26% with 10 emails a month. (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1509/jmr.16.0210>)

On-the-fence customers (occasional buyers): 6-10 emails per month worked best. These folks needed more reminders and nudges.

Lapsed customers (haven’t bought in a while): 12-14 emails per month were most effective. These people need more frequent contact to come back.

This pattern has been confirmed by other research, too. A 2016 paper in the *Journal of Business & Economic Statistics* found that the effectiveness of email frequency depends on the customer’s current engagement and their stage in the buying journey. (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07350015.2016.1141096>)

**Key takeaway:** Don’t treat your whole list the same. Segment your audience and adjust your frequency based on their behavior.

### **Early Engagement Is Critical — But Don't Overwhelm**

When someone initially signs up or makes a purchase, you have a golden window to build trust and loyalty. Research shows that sending a series of helpful, relevant emails in the first few weeks can dramatically increase retention and lifetime value. (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07350015.2016.1141096>)

*Continues on the right*

**Example:** A SaaS company marketer once told me he tested two onboarding sequences. One sent a daily tip for the first week, then weekly updates. The other sent just one welcome email. The daily sequence led to around 30% higher product adoption and something like 20% lower churn.

But there's a catch. If you push too hard — especially with sales pitches — you can drive people away. A study on abandoned cart emails found that sending a reminder too soon (within 24 hours) reduced conversion rates. Waiting 48 to 72 hours worked better. (<https://www.ijsr.net/getabstract.php?paperid=SR24913162038>)

(Editor's note: Mail these notices instead?)

**Key takeaway:** Front-load value in your first few emails. Focus on education, tips, and support—not just sales. Then, taper off to a steady rhythm.

### Quality Over Quantity — Make Every Email Count

It's tempting to think more emails mean more sales. But the research is clear: quality matters more than quantity, especially for your best customers. If every email is a hard sell, people tune out or unsubscribe.

Suppose a clothing brand were to test two approaches. In this scenario, one group of customers would receive three emails a week, all with discounts. Another group would get just one weekly email that included style tips, customer stories, and a single offer. Data suggests the second group would see higher open rates, more clicks, and more revenue.

**What works:** Share valuable content (how-tos, tips, stories),

Highlight customer success stories,

Offer exclusive deals, but not every time,

And, personalize when possible.

**Actionable tip:** Before you hit send, ask: "Does this email offer real value to my customer?" If not, rethink it.

### Test, Measure, and Adapt — Let Your Data Guide You

No two audiences are the same. The only way to find your sweet spot is to test different frequencies and track the results. Look at open rates, click rates, unsubscribes, and — most importantly — sales.

**Gleantap**, a marketing automation platform serving fitness, wellness, and service businesses, provides a concrete example of data-driven email frequency optimization:

**What They Did:** Gleantap analyzed their audience's engagement data and experimented with different email frequencies. They sent more frequent emails to highly engaged users and reduced the frequency for less active ones.

**What They Found:** Reducing email frequency for less engaged users led to a 15% increase in open rates and a 10% higher click-through rate. This approach also helped decrease unsubscribe rates, as less engaged users were not overwhelmed by too many emails.

**How They Adapted:** By continuously monitoring open rates, click rates, and unsubscribes, Gleantap was able to fine-tune its email cadence for each segment, ultimately improving both engagement and retention.

**Tip:** Start with a baseline frequency (such as once a week). Test adding a second email for a subset of your audience. Closely monitor your metrics — if unsubscribes spike, scale back; if engagement and sales rise, consider expanding the higher frequency to more segments.

### Segment and Personalize — One Size

*Continues on page 10*

## **Doesn't Fit All**

Modern email tools make it easy to segment your list. Send more frequent emails to new signups or lapsed customers. Send fewer, higher-value emails to your loyal buyers.

Personalize content based on past purchases or interests. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0969698924003916>)

**AIG**, a global insurance company, implemented a segmentation strategy based on customer engagement:

What They Did: AIG segmented its audience into highly engaged and less active users. Highly engaged users received two emails per week, while less active subscribers received emails every two weeks.

Results: This segmentation led to a 22% increase in open rates and a significant drop in unsubscribes. By tailoring frequency and content to each group's preferences, AIG improved both engagement and customer satisfaction.

The beauty retailer **Sephora** uses demography to personalize email content:

What They Do: Sephora tailors its email campaigns by age group, sending trendy makeup tutorials and celebrity collaborations to younger subscribers, while focusing skincare and anti-aging products for older customers.

Results: This targeted approach increases relevance, strengthens brand connection, and drives higher sales for desirable products.

**Weather Solve**, a company specializing in industrial wind and dust protection, segmented their email list by job role (engineers, procurement officers, operations managers), each with different content needs and tolerance for frequency.

What They Did: Tailored both content and cadence to each segment.

Results: Its open rate increased from 29% to 46% within two months.

**Tip:** Use your email platform's segmentation features. Even simple segments — like "new," "active," and "lapsed" — can make a big difference. Personalize content and frequency based on engagement, demographics, or behavioral data for best relevance and results.

## **Practical Steps for Small Businesses**

Here's how you can put this research into action:

1. Start with a welcome sequence: Send 3 to 5 emails in the first two weeks to new subscribers. Focus on value, not just sales.
2. Set a regular rhythm: Once a week is a good starting point for most small businesses.
3. Segment your list: At a minimum, separate new, active, and lapsed customers.
4. Test and measure: Try different frequencies. Watch your metrics and adjust.

Make every email valuable: Share tips, stories, and offers that interests your audience.

## **The Right Frequency Is the One That Works for Your Audience**

There's no magic number. The best frequency is the one that keeps your audience engaged, happy, and buying — without burning them out. Use this research as your guide, but let your own data lead the way.

Try these steps for the next three months. Watch what happens. You'll learn more about your customers — and build a stronger, more profitable relationship with every email you send.

# Direct Mail Fails!

Fix these mistakes before printing and mailing your promotions.



Who's Mailing What! recently held a live panel discussion on seven recent direct mail campaigns from the WMW! archive. The audience was polled, "MAIL IT" or "FAIL IT" before the discussion.

The results were split 4 to 3. Here are the campaigns that were voted down.



Participants describe this campaign as "a hot mess." And the reverse side is no better.

One panelist said, *"It looks like the company tried to cram its entire catalog onto an oversized postcard."*



Mailed by a real estate agent, presumably to her contact list, the immediate reaction was universal: *Why didn't they power wash the house*

*before taking the photograph?*

The copy on the reverse side describes the house as "freshened up." *Really?*



Some appreciate the serenity of this image and headline, finding it unusual for a university.

But, as a campus recruitment mailing, everyone agreed that more images of campus life are needed. The other side of the card has "lots of wasted space" to fix this.

But both panelists and audience members found that the campaigns receiving a positive evaluation could be improved.

The top three suggestions:

- (1) Never crowd your piece with too much "stuff." Less is more!
- (2) Hire or use your in-house designer from the start of your project, and
- (3) With local promotions, include a map (or better still, a variable map tied to the recipient's address) whenever possible.

To watch the replay, use the QR code on the right.



WMW! should do this again!



# SEND-OFF

## THE SCIENCE OF SCARCITY: USING CONSTRAINTS TO FUEL CREATIVITY

Constraints are often viewed as obstacles, but when approached correctly, they can serve as the catalyst for some of the most innovative and creative work. Understanding the science of scarcity — whether it's time, resources, or options — allows individuals and businesses to turn limitations into opportunities for growth and innovation. Here's how to make constraints work in your favor.

### 1. Reframe the Problem

When faced with scarcity, the key is to shift your mindset. Instead of focusing on what you lack, think of it as an opportunity to redefine the problem. Constraints force you to prioritize and focus on what truly matters. This clarity often leads to more effective and impactful solutions. Tip: Start by listing out the non-negotiables and work within those boundaries.

### 2. Embrace Simplicity

Scarcity often requires doing more with less. This can lead to elegant, simple solutions that might not have emerged in more abundant circumstances. A lack of resources forces you to strip away unnecessary complexity and focus on the core of the idea. Example: Many groundbreaking startups began with a bare-bones product that addressed a singular pain point before scaling up.

### 3. Set Defined Limits to Spark Creativity

Artificial constraints can be a powerful tool. For example, setting a tight deadline or limiting

available resources can push individuals to think outside traditional frameworks. These boundaries prevent overthinking and analysis paralysis, resulting in quicker and more innovative outcomes. Practice: Try timeboxing brainstorming sessions to keep ideas flowing without over-refinement.

### 4. Collaborate for Diverse Perspectives

When resources are limited, collaboration becomes crucial. Constraints encourage teams to come together, pool their skills, and find creative solutions not considered individually. By collaborating with others, you gain access to fresh perspectives and innovative approaches that enhance creativity.

### 5. Iterate and Experiment

Scarcity often eliminates the possibility of getting everything perfect on the first try, but it also encourages experimentation. Small-scale tests and iterations are faster and less risky when resources are tight, allowing you to refine and improve over time. Action Step: Break down big projects into smaller tasks that you can test quickly.

### 6. Learn from History

Many of history's most significant innovations emerged from scarcity. From wartime advancements to minimalist art movements, constraints have consistently fueled breakthroughs. Studying these examples can provide inspiration and a roadmap for applying similar principles to your challenges.

Scarcity doesn't have to be a limitation; it can be the very thing that drives your best work. By reframing the way you view constraints, simplifying your approach, leveraging collaboration, and embracing iterative learning, you can transform limitations into stepping stones for creativity and success.