

DIRECT FORUM

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Direct Forum is a free email newsletter containing useful direct marketing tips, news updates and how-to information. It's convenient, informative and I am not trying to sell you anything!

1. Letter writing: the original **Social Media** tool.

2. A heartfelt thanks to **friends** and **subscribers**

Letter writing: the original **Social Media tool.**



Letter writing was the original Social Media tool—it allowed us to get news about our family when we were away from home and we in turn could tell them what was happening in our lives

Once, letters from loved ones and family members comforted soldiers away from home or on the battle front and letters from soldiers did the same for those back home.

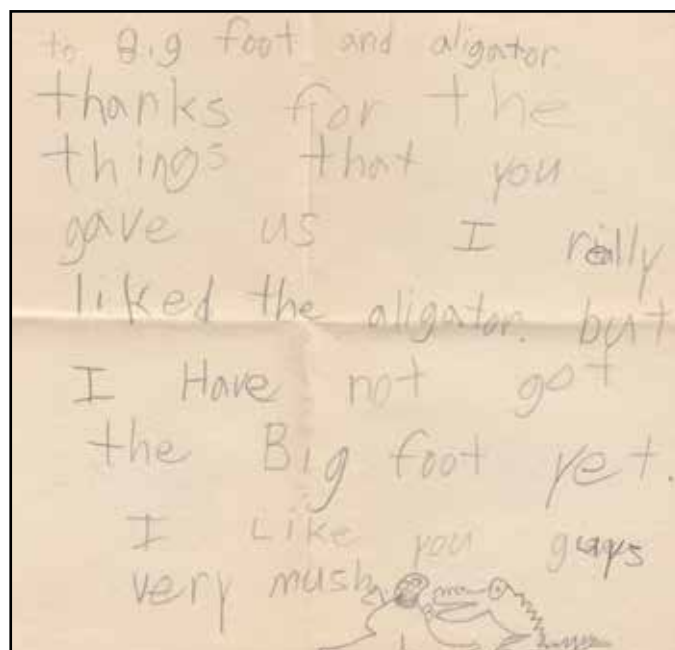
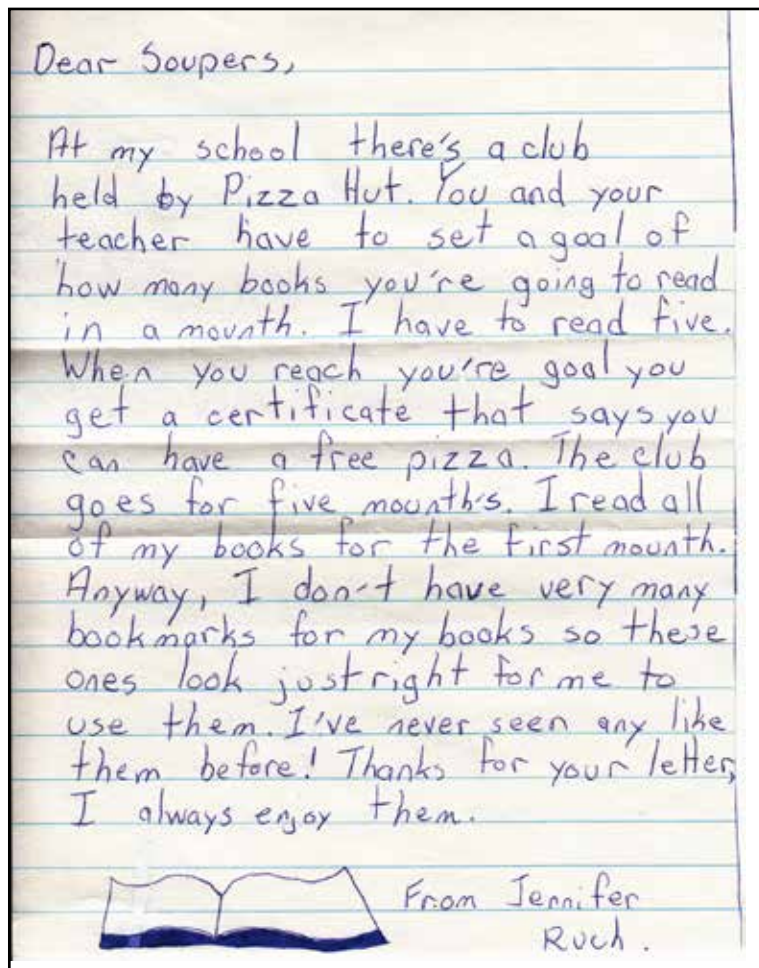
A letter of condolence gave us courage in times of grief and sorrow. A love-letter gave us joy and exhilaration.

About 23 years ago when I created the award winning “Super Soupers Club” for Lipton’s Big Foot and Alligator soups for kids, membership was \$2.00. Members received games, puzzles, book marks, a personalized birthday card, etc.

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We got a ton of letters back from kids telling us how much they liked receiving mail in their name and how much they loved hearing from us.

Here are a few that I have kept.



I guess there is something very intimate and magical about a letter that other mediums cannot duplicate. Plus you can touch it and save it and that adds to that charm.

In a recent article in *The New York Times* titled, *The Found Art of Thank-You Notes* author Guy Trebay wrote,

“The personal and professional thank-you notes Cristiano Magni, a New York fashion publicist, sends routinely are written on weighty ecru Connor correspondence cards adorned with a rhinoceros embossed in gold.”

“It is so important, in a digital

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world, to have the dignity to sit down and write something in your own hand,” Mr. Magni said one recent afternoon in a garment district showroom, where a collection of thank-you notes sent by editors and stylists was spread across his desk.

“It not only strengthens the bonds between people, in your personal life and in business, but it also rings an emotional chord.”

Ms. Madden, who manages a portfolio of family-owned properties and also oversees Portland’s Friday Evening Dancing Class for children, a social institution now in its 92nd year, added. **“As you grow older, it becomes more important when someone recognizes the effort you have made on their behalf and reciprocates in the form of a written acknowledgment.”**

“A text message just doesn’t cut it for the simple reason that conveying emotion in digital formats is a lost cause,” Ms. Madden observed.

And now, there seem to be privacy issues even in regard to the Internet, Online and Social Media sites.

Former US President Jimmy Carter, confessed, “When I want to communicate with a foreign leader privately, I type or write a letter myself, put it in the post office, and mail it,” he told NBC News reporter Andrea Mitchell with a chuckle. “Because I believe if I send an email, it will be monitored.”

The fact that even Apple and Google, both high-tech giants, are still using direct mail should be a wakeup call for businesses and non-profits.

If you’re still not sure about the sustainability of direct mail marketing, then it’s time to consider the numbers.

Despite the growth of digital media, direct mail response rates have held steady over the last 4 years (According to the Direct Marketing Association, N.Y)

Their key findings show:

- Response rates for Direct Mail have held steady over the past four years. Letter-sized envelopes, for instance, had a response rate of 3.42% for a house list and 1.38% for a prospect list.
- Email to a house list averaged a 1.73% conversion rate with a bounce-back rate of 3.72% and an unsubscribe rate of 0.77%.



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- Nearly 60% of direct mail campaigns in financial services aimed to produce a direct sale. The average response rate was a comparatively low 2.66% to a house list and 1.01% to a prospect list.

Other important findings reveal that:

- Almost 85% of marketers will be taking additional steps to protect customer data and privacy.

But perhaps the most surprising revelations are these facts:

- 73% of U.S. consumers and 67% of Canadian consumers said they prefer direct mail for brand communications because they can read the information at their convenience. Additionally, 62% of Americans and 63% of Canadians said they enjoy checking the mailbox for postal mail. (Epsilon's 2012 Channel Preference Study)
- In over 80% of homes the person in the household responsible for collecting and sorting mail will collect the mail at their first opportunity. And, once the mail is brought into the home, 80% will sort the mail immediately while 18% will sort it later that day. (USPS 2012 Mail Moment Study)
- 59% of U.S. respondents and 65% of Canadian respondents agreed with the following statement, "I enjoy getting postal mail from brands about new products." (Epsilon's 2012 Channel Preference Study)

- U.S. advertisers spend \$167 per person on direct mail to earn \$2,095 worth of goods sold, a 1,300% return. (print Drives Commerce 2013)

While these are just numbers the most powerful element in letter writing is storytelling.

As Seth Godin said, "Every time someone donates to a good cause, they're buying a story, a story that's worth more than the amount they donated."

So, if people aren't donating to your cause, it's because you're not telling a story, or telling the wrong story.

They aren't buying a story about *you*, they're buying a story that touches *them*.

Might I also add that I actually enjoy writing letters and my year-end cards because in the process of opening it, feeling the paper, reading the message in my voice, the recipient might actually feel like they have a piece of me in their hand.

Don't get me wrong, it's not a competition between mediums because each one is important and has its advantages and drawbacks—it's how you use each one most effectively to get the best results.

And if there is one thing that direct mail can do well, it's personalizing a message.

No wonder it's called direct or one-on-one marketing.

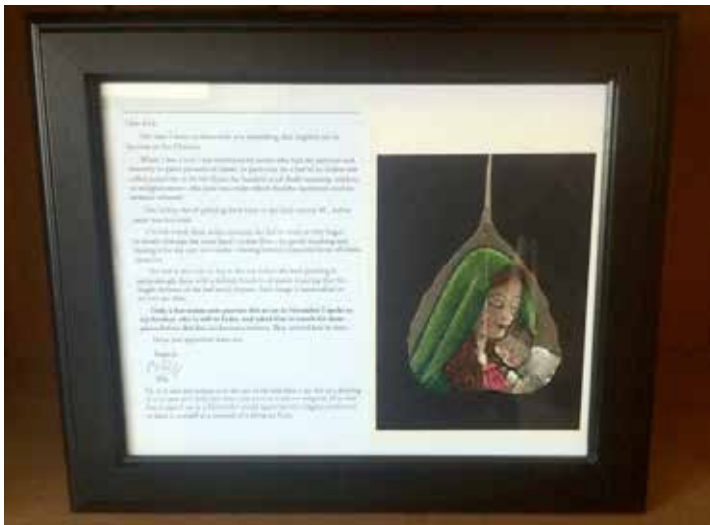
A heartfelt thanks

first, to my friends

I cannot let this pass by...

...that's because a number of friends who received my year-end mailing—of a painting on a leaf from India—have now told that they liked it so much that they actually framed it.

Most touching of all was a quick message and a photograph that one of my friends sent me recently. Here what he said: *hi billy hope all is well -- i finally got around to putting the amazing gift u send me at christmas on display -- everyone is really fascinated by it -- thank you very much -- it sits on the same shelf as the pictures of our parents -- you can be sure such heartfelt gifts r never throw out -- keep in touch. rick*



next to my subscribers

Because...

... It seems that many of you have been passing on my newsletter to your friends and colleagues and even clients. My list has now grown from a handful to over 600 subscribers.

Thank you. It encourages me to keep on going.

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To post a comment, please include your name, email address and your thoughts.

Let me remind you again that your name and/or e-mail address will never be shared, sold, circulated, or passed along to anyone else.

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