

## Integrated Marketing Case Study

### Direct marketing integrates with mass media to increase newspaper print subscriptions

**Campaign Goals:** Seeking ways to increase home print subscriptions for its four daily newspapers, Cox Media Group Ohio invited AgencyAxis to create a series of direct marketing campaigns that would complement CMGO's mass media efforts. As owners of a television station and two radio stations along with its four daily newspapers, CMGO had used its considerable mass media reach to boost subscribers and now wanted outside expertise to better utilize direct marketing methods (direct mail & email) that previously had not had a positive return on their investment.

**Challenge:** The decline of print newspaper subscriptions is a widely recognized national trend. Traditional methods of acquisition, like telemarketing, have continued to see declines in overall return and Cox needed to better utilize direct methods that tied to the overall marketing strategy for new subscription purposes. These marketing efforts included email and direct mail campaigns to key demographic and geographic segments in its south-west Ohio market.

**Approach:** The AgencyAxis approach began by making it clear there would be no "magic bullet" fix for the erosion in newspaper subscribers. Instead, the agency focused on linking to current CMGO messaging strategy and provided subject-matter expertise on direct methods that included the creation of a series of marketplace tests that would incrementally improve results in "earn while we learn" mode. One of the first improvements was creating simplified campaign-specific landing pages to cut down on the form abandonment rate of CMGO's existing all-purpose sign up form. The campaign thank you pages incorporated social media links to Facebook and Twitter. Another key feature was testing the effectiveness of offers. An early test pitted an

incentive item (a branded umbrella for the first 100 subscribers) versus a prize drawing (for an iPad 2). The incentive item produced a higher conversion rate and became the standard offer for future campaigns. Email test parameters included the effectiveness of personalized subject lines and personalized salutations along with testing the open rates for offer subject lines vs. benefit subject lines. Direct mail appeals tested the choice of response channels including QR codes. The results for all campaigns were tracked by non- customer and former customer along with the type of subscription being offered and the type of subscription of the former customer. Throughout the campaigns, AgencyAxis worked with CMGO to present a consistent brand message and leverage ongoing mass media efforts. In all, three campaigns for summer, fall and winter were deployed during 2011.

**Results:** The 'earn while we learn' approach allowed for campaign over campaign improvement in click-through and open rates along with increases in DM response rates. The strategy of funnel improvement on the CMGO order-entry website saw a two-fold increase in conversion rates compared to the previous method. Additional insights drawn from continuous data analysis also improved the approach to email creative.

