

7 proven techniques to boost response

by Dean Rieck

My grandfather used to say, "There's more than one way to skin a cat!" And if you made the mistake of asking, he would describe each way in grisly detail.

As a direct response copywriter, designer, and consultant, I'm always discovering new and better ways to help my clients sell things. So I know there's more than one way to write a letter, design an order form, or phrase an offer. (And if you make the mistake of asking me, I'll describe each way in excruciating detail.)

But I also know from long experience that it's often the tried-and-true that leads to the best results. And while there are no sure things in our business, there are a handful of techniques that have a long history of raising response almost every time they are tested. Here are seven of them:

"Yes/No" offer. It usually pulls better than an offer without a "no" option. It's popular for subscriptions, but I've used it with other promotions, even fundraising. I like to use the "yes" and "no" tokens, but you can use other techniques, such as check boxes, separate reply cards or different return envelopes. Why does it work? It draws attention, adds urgency, increases involvement and clarifies both the offer and what must be done to accept it.

Credit card payment. You probably already allow customers to order with a credit card, but it bears repeating: A credit card option usually out-pulls a cash-only option. But always allow payment by check or money

order for those who are uncomfortable with giving out a credit card number. Tips: On your order form, use icons for the credit cards you accept. They communicate instantly and may even add a little credibility (just as the "As Seen On TV" icon adds credibility).

Time limit. For many, a time limit seems counterintuitive. You might ask, "If I say customers have to respond by the 24th, won't I lose all orders after that?" Maybe, but you'll gain more orders before that. In fact, you'll usually get more orders overall and get them faster. A time limit fights inertia and forces people to make a decision now. A specific date is the most powerful, but you can fudge and ask for a reply in "the next 14 days" or "by the end of the month" or something similar.

Free gift. This usually outperforms a discount offer. And it provides the added benefit of maintaining the value of your product or service. (A discount can backfire, training cus-

tomers to expect lower prices.) And it works so well, you should give away something free whenever you can.

Sweepstakes. I have a love/hate relationship with sweepstakes. They usually increase order volume, but they torpedo customer loyalty. And many marketers get trapped in an endless cycle of sweepstakes offers to keep orders flowing. My advice? Think long and hard before committing to a sweepstakes strategy.

Envelope package. It usually performs better than a self-mailer. Why? You have more real estate to work with. It allows you to divide and conquer, separating out the order form, letter, product information, guarantee, etc. And all the bits and pieces make for more involvement. The more involved you can get people and the more they read, the greater your chance for getting an order. But a self-mailer is cheaper, easier and sometimes may even get a better response. So when in doubt, test.

Bind-in card. It usually increases ►

Savingteen highlights

Included with your copy of *Connection* this quarter is the *Savingteen* supplement to the January issue of *Credit Union Magazine*. For effective ways to reach out to young members (and potential members), take a look. *Savingteen* covers:

- Why high-schoolers are flunking personal finance and what can be done about it
- Credit unions' growing interest in the 14-to-18-year-old market
- Starting a youth advisory board
- Savvy teen clubs offering adult services for members under 18
- Online services you'll need to retain young members



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response to a print ad. No mystery here. A bind-in card is easier to use than a coupon. Just pull it out and mail it. But a coupon has to be cut with scissors (could be hard to find) or ripped out by hand (which often results in a mess). Not all publications allow a bind-in, and it's often expensive. But when you can test it, test it, because it can sometimes double (or triple or quadruple) your response.

As with all techniques, these proven winners can be modified to fit your particular needs. For example, in a recent subscription package, I

used a variation of the "Yes/No" offer in the form of "Free" and "No thanks" tokens.

The copy beside the "Free" token read, "Return your invitation with this token, and we'll send your free issues immediately." The copy beside the "No thanks" token read, "Return your invitation with this token, and we'll give your free issues to someone else." It's hard to say no and lose something free.

But what's the best, most proven way to skin a cat? Don't ask. ■

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designer, and consultant. He has made sales, generated leads, and raised funds for a virtual who's who of direct marketing companies—over 150 businesses in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. He is president of Direct Creative, 2102 Brookhurst Avenue, Columbus, OH, 43229, a direct marketing firm that provides creative services for direct mail and direct response advertising. He may be reached by phone: (614)882-8823 or by email: DeanRieck@DirectCreative.com. For free access to dozens of Dean's articles, visit The Learning Center at www.DirectCreative.com.

Good reading for CU marketers

Here are some recently published CUNA articles and books of special interest to marketers. To purchase a book or to subscribe, call 800-356-8010.

Books

Credit Union Executive's E-Commerce Survey Report. 233 pages. November 2000. See how your Web site compares, and find new online services to attract and retain members.

From Credit Union Exec Online

"The Pluses of Permission Marketing," November 20, 2000. An effective program can save costs and improve member retention.

"Out of the Mouths of Experts," October 16, 2000. The movers and the shakers of the financial services industry share their wisdom, including strategies for marketing to women.

"Survey Your Wired Members Online," September 18, 2000. How and why to survey your online members.

From Credit Union Executive Journal

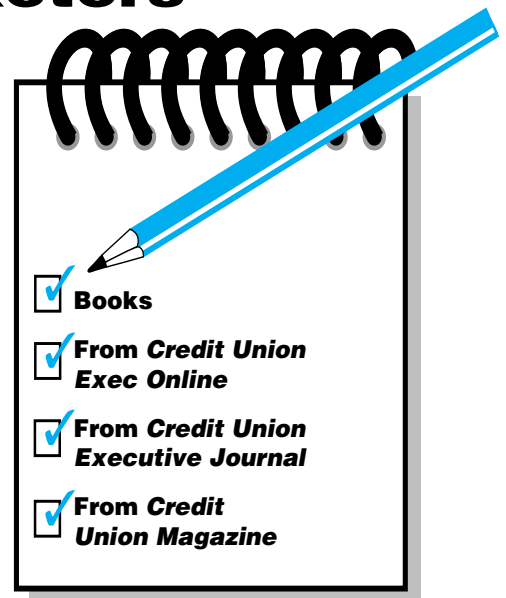
"The New Face of Marketing," November/December 2000. Modifying and augmenting traditional marketing practices to accommodate the needs of a technology-driven, competitive atmosphere.

"Reaching Out to Young Adults," September/October 2000. Also available through *Exec Online*. Strategies to attract young members, including understanding their needs and offering the right product mix.

From Credit Union Magazine

"Database Marketing," December 2000. Sophisticated software can turn a database into a marketing opportunity—if members opt in.

"Use Straight Talk to Gain a Competitive Edge," November 2000. How clear are your marketing com-



munications? Ask yourself these five questions and decide.

"Reach Youths Now; Keep Them Forever," November 2000. Three credit unions share ideas that have worked for them.

"Marketing to Women," October 2000. Women handle daily financial tasks in more than 70% of households and influence up to 85% of financial decisions. See how credit unions are changing to appeal to women.

"Evaluate Your Newsletter," September 2000. Next to your credit union's annual report, member newsletters should be your signature publications. ■

CREDIT UNION CONSUMER FACTS Connection

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- Figuring how much house you can afford and saving for the down payment
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- Taking care of an elderly parent's finances

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Customization* commitment & address file due February 8, 2001
 Inkjet message & customization* materials due February 23, 2001
 Scheduled mail date April 10, 2001

Third Quarter 2001

Perspective Topic—Vehicles and Credit Union Financing

Key Dates

Customization* commitment & address file due May 9, 2001
 Inkjet message & customization* materials due May 25, 2001
 Scheduled mail date July 17, 2001

**Customize Home & Family Finance with your credit union's own pages (minimum order is 5,000). Call CUNA Customer Service department at 800-356-8010, press 2, for details.*



www.cuna.org/googolplex.htm

Attract young members to your Web site and to *Googolplex* with full-color bookmarks. Printed on sturdy paper, these bright bookmarks come four to a page. Add your logo and Web site with a photocopier or have CUNA imprint and trim. Order Stock No. 22960.

In February, March, and April, your young members (and potential members) can learn about these topics:

Elementary school

- Speak up for what you want
- Cash drawer calamity activity
- I'm looking under a 4-leaf ...
- Toy store memory quiz

Middle school

- What about free offers?
- Dingo lingo activity
- How does the stock market work?
- Boost your self-confidence
- Maze activity

High school

- Alien dating game
- How much do I have to save to be a millionaire?
- Studying a year abroad
- Headlines—Which are bogus?
- Credit card companies are targeting you



www.cuna.org/hffo.htm

Have you seen the personal finance guides? Your members can now link to five online guides—Money: Getting a Good Start, Vehicle Buying, Vehicle Leasing, Home Buying, and Retirement Planning.

Here are some coming topics:

February 2001

- Debit card benefits
- Shopbots: How the Web can help you compare prices
- Pros and cons of annuities
- Financial side of adoption

March 2001

- Find out about vehicle recalls
- Buying a home? Examine the homeowner association first
- Debit cards for kids
- What to look for in timeshares

April 2001

- Manufactured housing and financing
- How much should you save for retirement?
- Labor rules for working teens
- Trustee responsibilities

Marketers in charge of e-commerce strategy

In most credit unions with Web sites (53%), the marketing department shares responsibility for e-commerce strategy, according to *Credit Union Executive's E-Commerce Survey Report*. Other staff members likely charged with e-commerce strategy include the head of information systems/technology (34%) and

the CEO (20%). The marketing department also tops the list for heading e-commerce customer service and Web page maintenance.

What are all these marketers putting on their Web sites? Nearly all include information about the credit union, its field of membership, and its product line. Around a fourth of

credit unions with Web sites provide online access to all products and services, while an additional 48% plan to add Web access in the next two years.

To order the report, call 800-356-8010, press 3, and request Stock No. 23107AC ■

Staff Primarily Responsible for E-Business Strategy

	N	Marketing department	Head of information systems/technology	CEO/president/manager*	E-Commerce manager	Web-master	Other management*	Outsider provider
Overall	301	53%	34%	20%	12%	6%	5%	4%
By credit union asset size								
Less than \$5M	1	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
\$5M-\$10M	4	25	25	25	0	0	25	0
\$10M-\$20M	15	13	13	67	7	7	0	7
\$20M-\$50M	47	47	30	28	9	4	4	9
\$50M-\$100M	65	69	29	12	6	5	3	3
\$100M-\$200M	71	68	44	1	14	7	11	0
\$200M or more	97	60%	55%	2%	28%	10%	2%	0%

*Write-in response.

Reaching youth with Small Talk

Annually, the Bridge Awards recognize excellence in member communications. Last year, Arizona Holsum Credit Union in Phoenix won for its youth newsletter, Small Talk, in the less than \$30 million in assets category. Here's a snapshot of Arizona Holsum's outreach to youth plans, which the staff of seven all have a hand in.

Credit union: Arizona Holsum Credit Union, Phoenix, Ariz.
Membership: 1,800, employee group sponsored

Youth outreach philosophy: "Children are the members of the future, so why not target them!" explains Katie Shugart, member services representative.

Youth newsletter: Small Talk, sent to 135 youth
Target: Children 0-16
Newsletter format: Color, 8.5 x 14, printed both sides featuring special offers, money facts, games, and cartoon character Curious Kyle and Wendy Wonder. Freelance artist Cindy Shievitz creates the newsletter.

Frequency: Quarterly
Special services: Children can open an account with only a \$5 deposit (instead of the regular \$25 minimum) and earn a higher rate on their shares, currently 4%. While available to all members, discounted tickets to movie theaters, water parks, and amusement parks are popular. On special occasions, the credit union offers raffles and give aways. ■



Artwork courtesy of CUNA's Copy Express Online. For subscription information, visit www.cuna.org/copyexpress.htm.

Googolplex Cheat Sheet

Kids whiz their way through Web sites, navigating effortlessly. Those of us old enough to vote, however, need a little guidance. So here's a quick guide that shows how Googolplex brings your members something new each week.

New story with links to noncommercial sites

New interactive game

Your credit union's name shows here and on every "page"

"Googolplex" is the largest named number and the name of this online service for young members

Geared toward elementary schoolers

Where all respectable middle schoolers spend 90% of waking hours

See a demo issue at www.cuna.org/googolplex.htm

Brought to you by ABC Credit Union

GOOGOLPLEX

The CU Guide For Student Money-makers

Five-Spot Clubhouse

Current Activity

Current Story

AJ's Mega-Mall

Current Activity

AL'S AWLS

"One Day This Awl Will Be Yours."

Current Story

C-Note University

Current Activity

Current Story

Loose Change

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More Activities

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Back to Your CU

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www.cuna.org/googolplex.htm
 Order online or call 800-356-8010, press 2.

Home & Family Finance index for 2000

For your convenience, here's an index to *Home & Family Finance* articles published in 2000. Limited copies of back issues are available through CUNA Customer Service. To inquire, call 800-356-8010, press 2.

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