

Reach vs. Frequency: Is it better to reach 25 People Four Times or 100 People Once

By Julie Chance

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Reach vs. Frequency

Is it more effective to touch 100 potential customers once or 25 potential customers 4 times?

by Julie Chance

Reach and frequency are terms generally used when planning advertising campaigns. However, the concept of reach and frequency applies to any promotional activity you undertake: direct mail, direct selling, and even networking.

Reach is the number of people you touch with your marketing message or the number of people that are exposed to your message. Frequency is the number of times you touch each person with your message. In a world of unlimited resources you would obviously maximize both reach and frequency. However, since most of us live in the world of limited resources we must often make decisions to sacrifice reach for frequency or vice versa.

For example, an air conditioning repair service who has decided to do a direct mail piece has to decide whether to mail the entire Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex once or to mail a quarter of the Metroplex four times. An attorney who receives many of her clients through networking may have to decide whether to attend one weekly networking meeting or four different monthly meetings.

When faced with decisions of reach vs. frequency remember this rule of thumb: Reach without Frequency = Wasted Money

Marketing is the process of building a business relationship with potential customers. Have you ever established a lifelong friendship with someone you had contact with only once? Probably not. Generally friendships (and all relationships for that matter) grow as a result of frequent contact over time. Even when the potential to form a great friendship is there at the first encounter, it is unlikely it will grow without nurturing.

Seth Godin in his book Permission Marketing uses an analogy of seeds and water to demonstrate the importance of assuring adequate frequency in your promotional campaigns. If you were given 100 seeds with enough water to water each seed once would you plant all 100 seeds and water each one once or would you be more successful if you planted 25 seeds and used all of the water

on those 25 seeds?

While intuitively and even conceptually we understand the importance of frequency to successful promotional and sales campaigns, somehow when it comes to actually implementing the campaign, we opt to sacrifice frequency for reach. And then we complain about the ineffectiveness of our promotional efforts. Undoubtedly one of the biggest wastes of marketing dollars is promotional activities that are implemented without adequate frequency.

When faced with the decision of mailing one direct mail piece to 10,000 people or mailing to 2,500 people four times think about the fate of those 100 seeds you can water only once. Unless you have water rights and can obtain additional water, opt for less reach and more frequency.

Julie Chance is president of Strategies-by-DESIGN, a Dallas based firm that helps small businesses and service professionals Map A Path to Success by providing consulting, training and skills based coaching in the area of marketing strategy development. For more information or to sign up for our free marketing tips e-newsletter go to www.strategies-by-design.com or call 972-701-9311

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