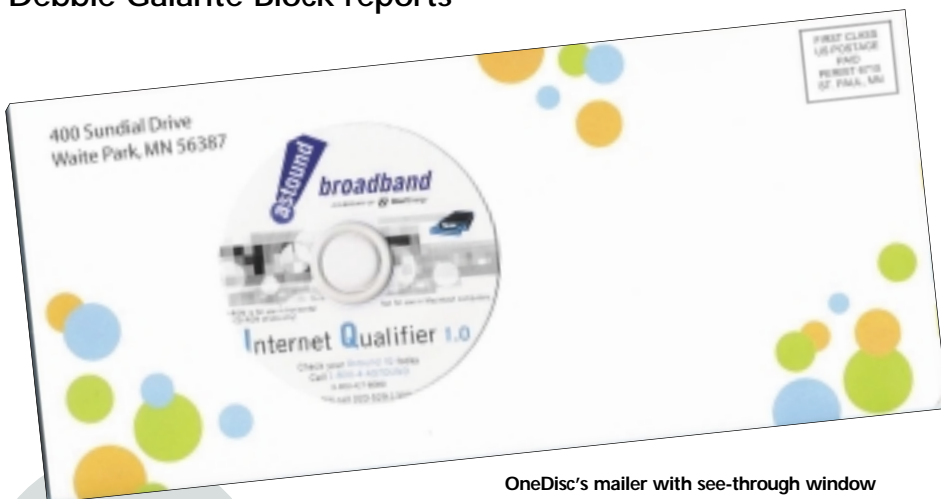


Packs for postage

The use of CD mailers in direct marketing has been an under-used resource, but that is rapidly changing; mailers are becoming an opportunity of growth for packaging companies. Debbie Galante Block reports



OneDisc's mailer with see-through window enhances the direct marketing message

It's not uncommon today to open a mailbox and find a CD promoting a car, a vacuum cleaner or even a Broadway show. This article is not about direct marketing per se, but the need for all of these content providers to have packaging for their mailings that is sturdy, secure and attention grabbing. No one interviewed could say how big this market's potential is, but all industry sources interviewed feel this niche is one that deserves some focus. What could be better than mailing a disc instead of a brochure? Disc costs are dramatically cheaper. In most cases, discs cost the same as mailing a letter, but its impact is so much more.

"Companies spend so much money and time getting the message to look right on brochures and on discs. Then they have to put that message in an envelope, which traditionally has not supported or enhanced the intent of this direct mail. What we've tried to do is create envelopes that work like a frame for a great painting," says David Coho, director of sales and marketing, Univenture, based in Marysville, Ohio.

Pushing the creative envelope
Developed in partnership with American Profol, Univenture's EnvyPak mailer made its debut last year. The purpose of this package is to give a hint at what's inside. It can be

purchased with the whole front and/or back made of clear polypropylene (PP). "The PP we are using is more than off-the-shelf poly," says Coho. "It's 100% recyclable. We had to make it somewhat rigid, but not brittle, and somewhat soft, but not too flimsy. The most critical aspect of developing a new mailer is that it has to fit US postal service criteria. We had to incorporate their pretty stringent material requirements."

The EnvyPak has a 3/8-inch to 1-inch seal area around the perimeter of the package, which is very different than an envelope or other disc packaging sleeves that are usually folded or welded in a bead pattern. "The reason we create this type of seal is to provide a protective edge so it's almost like a border or insulator," according

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to Coho. "If you are putting in collateral material and it gets hit through the mail, it won't dog ear the content. Often, you will get a nice brochure in a nice envelope, but if it has been hit on the corner a couple of times, the brochure doesn't have that pristine, clean look."

Univenture recently announced a successful EnvyPak sale to the Copernio Corporation, a specialist in the defence systems and photonics research markets. The EnvyPak's clear poly front mailer with paper backing provided postal workers and potential customers to look inside and verify the absence of any foreign substances, which is ideal for high security applications. Peter Berghammer, CEO of Copernio explains, "We did a show in conjunction with the US embassy in Brazil in which all of the documentation went first to the embassy, then onto separate consulates within the country and then on to secure aerospace and defence facilities in Brazil. We found out that we were the only company (out of 50) whose materials passed inspection without opening."

Univenture offers custom direct mail packaging as well. Brandie Jensen, president, Maestro, had Univenture develop a package specifically for her Idaho company, started up three years ago to aid companies with business coaching and training. The product is designed for managers and supervisors to help with accountability. When Maestro was ready to do its first direct mail piece, Jensen approached Univenture who turned her thoughts into a real package. The resulting mailer is blue and textured with the Maestro logo printed on the back. It looks almost like a leather portfolio. The CD enclosed is the same colour as the package.

"This is the first piece we've mailed, and we knew when trying to come up with a design that a white envelope in a stack of white paper is going to be cast aside," says Jensen. "I wanted to create something with either a colour border or a complete colour that would catch someone's eye in a stack of mail."

The company did get calls as a result of the mailing, Jensen adds, and Maestro's marketing executive has been following up with recipients and has found that about 50% of the people at least remembered receiving the mailing.

OneDisc.com, based in St Paul, Minneapolis, is concentrating on packaging too. While the company actually offers products and services that pull together a whole job for customers from



Univenture's EnvyPak (far left) for Copernio, the company's direct mail packaging for Maestro (left) and (bottom left) Netflix's movie rental mailer



pre-mastering and replication through packaging and fulfilment, Tom Vanderpool, CEO/CTO, is very involved with the direct mail pieces. He has seen a lot of success with its patented Direct Mail Windowed Envelope, which is either a white or printed envelope for CD or DVD mailings. The two envelope designs are available to accommodate either a mini CD or mini DVD. The envelope, with CD or DVD, and one sheet of paper combined, weighs under one ounce, which allows it to be mailed using a standard first class stamp or for lower rates, using a bulk mail campaign. The envelopes have a clear window for the disc, which is held securely in place by a clear pocket inside the envelope. An optional clear window is also available for the address. Either window can be placed on the right or left side. Other custom windows are available for custom-shaped discs as well, such as a heart or badge. One customer is an Internet Service Provider (ISP) which daily sends out the "New Subscriber Letter" with a mini CD for configuring a computer for the new account, Vanderpool says.

Another product new to the market is the cardboard-based Disc Box Slider (DBS) from Stora Enso, Finland. Pekka Tommola, sales manager, points to the package's success as a mailer with digital printing giving it extra value. Tommola cites the Belgian *Yellow Pages* mailing campaign, which called for the sending of 45,000 personalised DBS cases. "The package and content has been delivered undamaged via postal services," he says. Nevertheless the Deutsche Post (German Post) has told Stora Enso that in order to be officially accepted as a

mailer, DBS should be closed with an additional sticker or mechanism.

Information Packaging, based in Macedon, New York, recently produced three different versions of its Mailsaver for aircraft maintenance documents. Brenda Fitzsimons, marketing manager, says this mailer is made out of a lighter weight board and is postcard size, so it falls within postal specs that allow it to be sent at a reduced rate (versus square board mailers, which have considerably higher postal rates because of their shape).

A company that specialises in software for team building also recently used Mailsaver mailers. This mailer had a small, rectangular window in it that housed a rectangular business card size CD. The disc had various clues that were used in a scavenger hunt type exercise for promoting team building in an organisation, Fitzsimons explains.

Mailers as branding

One of the best known rental companies in the US is Netflix, the movie rental company. Steve Swasey, company spokesman, described the package that was designed in-house. It is a 6-inch x 8-inch, bright red reinforced paper package with an address print on it. When the customer is ready to return the movie he has just watched, he will rip off one flap and then there is another flap to fold over, seal and the DVD is ready for return.

The package has a pocket to hold the DVD in place, and it is tabbed to go through the postal machines without separating or ripping. Netflix ships about 1.2 million discs a day from 37 distribution centres. "We have 3.6 million members that rent DVDs. The Netflix mailers are the representation of our brand. It's how the DVDs get to customers," Swasey says.

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In 2005, Information Packaging also produced its DDMailer with two windows – one on the front to display an address on a letter, and a window on the back to display part of a CD. This mailer was produced for a private, upscale boys summer camp, according to Fitzsimons. The DDMailer is manufactured from coated paper (versus paperboard) and allows marketing messages to be printed on the outside and inside of the piece. "The unique properties of the design allow the messages inside to be seen when the person opens up the piece," she says.

A paper two-way mailer to be used by online rental companies is also new from Information Packaging. This mailer will allow a company to send a customer a disc to an end user and the user, in turn, will be able to send the disc back to the company in the original mailer. The company will reportedly be marketing this new mailer to the industry in the first quarter of this year.

The Netflix package has evolved. Prior to 1999, it was a different colour. "The red came in when we did a whole marketing and branding effort. We made it red because theatres are often associated with red; red carpet and red curtain," Swasey says. Recently, the company has also begun to sell advertising on the inside flap to studios for announcement of upcoming movies. Currently, more than 55,000 titles are available from Netflix.

Some may wonder why *MediaPack* found only a handful of packaging designers thinking beyond the traditional boxes and padded envelopes to create something new. If a picture paints a thousand words, so can a package because it is the first impression one gets when looking at a product, sources involved in new packaging emphasise. Ultimately, they say, mailers are a great opportunity of growth for packaging companies. ●