interMediate
Marketing For
Mediation Services

inter
Mediate

Most mediation services need to attract new customers in order to grow, and in some cases to become independently viable. However, most mediation services can't afford expensive investments in marketing. interMediate version 3.2 addresses this problem by extending its Agency mail list function to support large scale mailing campaigns. Database building and mailing by email is a very cost effective way to find new customers and to create awareness and identity amongst target groups. This guide explains how to apply interMediate in this way.

defining a target market

For any marketing approach to succeed, the start point must be a clear understanding of what's to be provided, who may buy it and what benefits the buyers want to achieve. A target market isn't just a list of organisations, it's the people within them, with recognition of their different interests and how a mediation service may provide the benefits they need. Bear in mind that the interests and needs of new markets may not be the same as those of existing customers.

marketing method

A conventional marketing campaign, say sending a well designed printed piece to a target market with a response method, is usually too costly for most mediation services. It's also an all or nothing approach - to justify the creative and print costs the target mail list must be large, so postage is also costly and small organisations struggle to follow up contacts from large campaigns. Email is more viable because it avoids all of these problems. Regular small emailings are much less costly, easier to follow up regularly and each one's message can be written for the special interests of a small group of people.

database building

In interMediate, Agency records are a catch-all category for referrers, prospective mediators, marketing targets, and case management resources like meeting venues and interpreters. It's easy to build the database by continually adding and updating the records in the normal course of business. The database can link records so, for example, the different departments of local government can be entered individually for different purposes, whilst recognising that they're all part of the same organisation. New database records can usually be added by a combination of Internet research and telephone canvassing.

It's quite practical for a community mediation service to identify all of the following within a forty mile radius by simple Google searches: local government departments, housing associations, tenant's associations, Relate offices, Citizen's Advice Bureaux, police stations, victim support services, law centres, ASBO offices, probation offices, magistrate's courts, county courts, environmental health offices, solicitors, clinics, hospitals, colleges and schools. Finding the right people can be harder, but can be done by giving everyone in the organisation a target to add a few new people records to the database every day. It will soon grow.

mail list selection

For many organisations a mail list is a fairly static thing. Records are entered on the mail list and stay there for too long, especially for list managers who can't afford regular list cleaning. interMediate's mail list management can be used in this way, but it's main purpose is to allow lists to be selected and deselected easily, as required. This may be done by any of these criteria: name, target interest, town, area, type, parent organisation, referrers and whether or not they are already on or off the mailing list. To do this, go to the Agency List screen and click the Mail List button. Use Search and the column Sort headers to select records individually or as groups, then the select/deselect controls as explained on the screen. For more information about this, click the Help button on the Agency List screen.

Having selected a number of organisations for a mailing, to work with the records as a group click the red Mail List header on the Agency List screen. The list is divided into those selected and unselected for a mailing. Click the first selected record, then click the Summary tab to see its detail. To go to the next selected record in the list, click the right arrow at the bottom of the screen.

To select individual people for the Mail List, use the Edit view of an Agency record. In the people table there are three Mail List controls, to select or deselect each person, to enter a person's specialist interest and to block mailings. No Mailings is respected by interMediate in all circumstances.

creating a circular

To create a circular, go to the Agency Letters screen. Click the button to Add a Circular and then select the type of recipient - either Agencies on the Mail List, or people who share the same selected Speciality. interMediate creates the Letter record and it appears on the Letter Index of every organisation that will receive it.

Writing a good marketing letter is something of an art, especially for sending by email when the recipient's attention span may be short. However, there are a few simple rules:

  keep in mind what you are trying to achieve - usually a choice between building an identity and a relationship or prompting an immediate response;

  for service providers it's particularly important to adopt a style that's consistent with the values inherent to the service,

  define the proposition and its benefits and focus on these in the text;

  avoid making assumptions about what people feel or think about the proposition;

  specify how to respond to the message;

  for people who will be mailed more than once, make sure that each mailing adds something new that can be expected to interest the recipient;

  include an email address for requests to be taken off the mailing list.

sending a circular

Circulars may be sent by email, post or fax and the Contact List button produces a list of the recipients, either as labels or exported as an Excel database. Email is usually the least costly, fastest and can prompt the most immediate response. The people selection for a circular can change after the Letter record is created, usually to correct mistakes that become apparent when previewing the Letter before printing or sending it.

interMediate sends emails by passing them to the email software where each one can be checked before sending. Copies are retained in the email Sent Items basket as well as in interMediate.

For printed letters or faxes, interMediate also prints a single file copy of the Letter text and an address list.

following up a circular

"Little and often" is also a good mantra for following up mailings. Most small organisations can manage to send a few mailings each week and follow them up properly, usually with a phone call. Add a note about the outcome in the target agency's record as necessary.