

TALE OF THE TAPE

The founder of small business marketing mainstay Duct Tape Marketing shares advice on how to make your messaging stick.

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AS the head of Duct Tape Marketing, John Jantsch has developed a reputation as one of the most influential and informed small business marketers in the nation. Based in Kansas City, Mo., the marketing coach and speaker is the author of several small business marketing books, including *Duct Tape Marketing — The World’s Most Practical Small Business Marketing Guide* and *The Referral Engine — Teaching Your Business to Market Itself*. He also pens the Duct Tape Marketing Blog, which was chosen as a *Forbes* favorite for marketing and small business. And his podcast — a top 15 marketing show on iTunes — was called a “must listen” by *Fast Company* magazine.

Jantsch created the Duct Tape Marketing small business marketing system eight years ago to provide hands-on strategic advice and resources. Today, more than 60 of his coaches are actively engaged with about 1,000 small businesses worldwide.

Jantsch also works with many large companies in an effort to bring practical and effective marketing products and strategies to the world of small business. *Deliver*® spoke with him to get his assessment of modern small biz marketing strategies and to find out how small brands can best maximize mail and today's integrated platforms.

DELIVER: We've seen a lot of changes in direct marketing over the past several years. What are some of the biggest ways these changes are impacting small businesses?

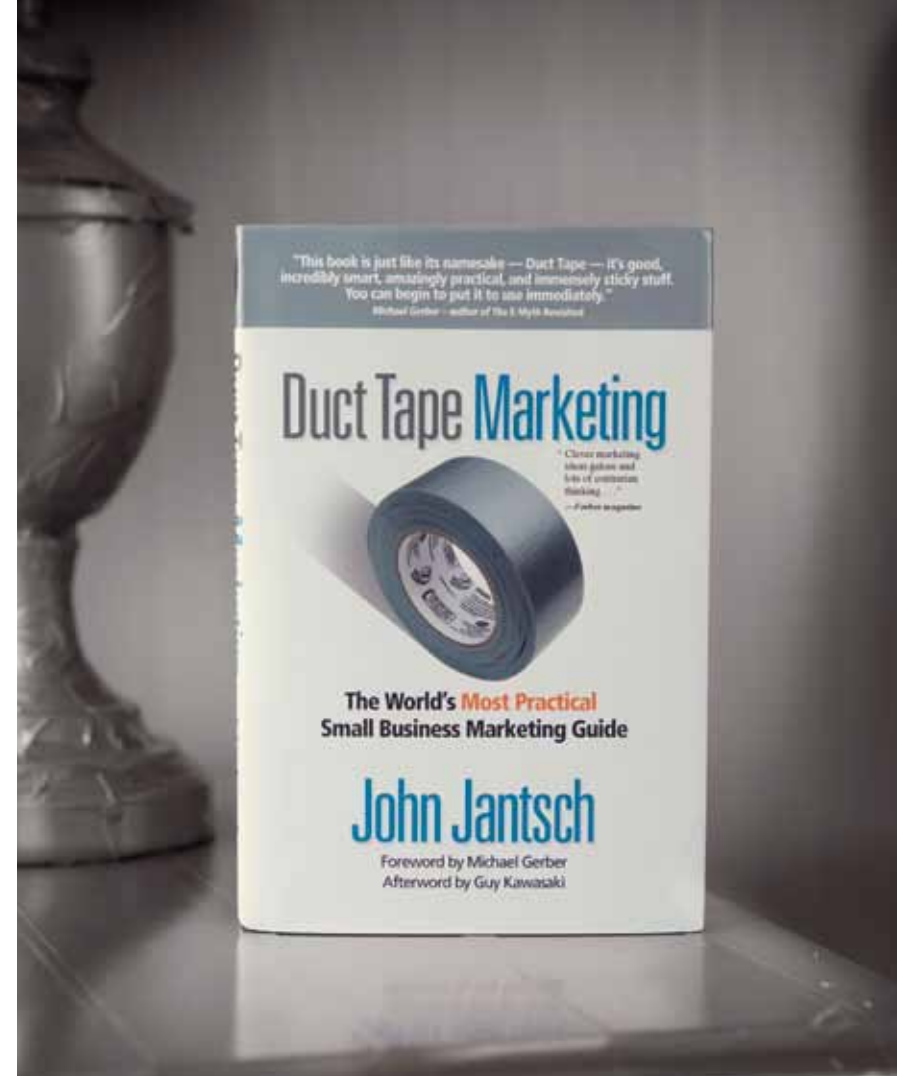
JOHN JANTSCH: The most effective ways to use it have changed, because of technology and what's been happening online. Small business owners have become a little more evolved when it comes to integrating traditional direct marketing like direct mail and these new online platforms. They're now using it in a two-step fashion to create awareness, offer information or have a call to action that's more than just a 'Hey, call us so we can come out and sell you something' kind of message. But there is still a tremendous amount of untapped potential for small businesses to reach markets they may not be able to reach in other ways, to create awareness about their products and services, to offer additional information or valuable tips they might put online, to direct people to their blogs or maybe tell them about a seminar they are doing online. The people who are using all of these tools in combination are the ones who are getting the most value out of them.

DELIVER: Why does mail continue to be so important?

JOHN JANTSCH: Even though there's a lot of hype about everybody being online today, there are still certain people you're not going to reach unless you're using highly targeted direct mail. And one great advantage that direct mail offers is control: You can't control when someone's going to write something nice about you in the newspaper, and you can't always control if someone's going to refer business to you. But if you have a new product or special promotion coming out, you can guarantee that a certain number of people are going to be shown your message on the exact date you want it to go out. That's one thing people underestimate when it comes to the value of direct mail.

DELIVER: What are some of the major concerns small businesses have about direct mail?

JOHN JANTSCH: One of the biggest concerns is that there are a lot of things you can do these days without writing a check, whereas buying postage and printing marketing materials in order to generate leads requires you to spend money before you even get your message out. Some people think they can just send e-mails



without cost or join social networks and mine them for leads. But as a marketing mentality, that won't get you far.

Another issue is that you see so many ineffective uses of direct mail — pieces that don't really offer a call to action, a place for someone to get more information, that are not targeted properly.

DELIVER: So what's the most important factor in upping ROI from direct mail?

JOHN JANTSCH: I tell people to create the smallest mailing list you possibly can. You can't just go to a list company and say, 'I need homeowners in this ZIP code.' What you're going to get from that is 75 percent to 80 percent of people who are never going to be interested in your product or service, because they fall outside of an age range, a lifestyle range or some other qualifying factor. There are so many ways you can append that data with behaviors that are meaningful to your specific task. If you do that you will lower your overall cost and dramatically increase your return because you're sending your message to the right people.

DELIVER: How do you develop those reliable lists?

JOHN JANTSCH: A good relationship with a list broker whom you can trust is one of the best assets you can have in the direct mail game. You need to spend time finding a good referral — not necessarily from someone in your own industry — for a good

broker who will spend the time to understand your business and who also has the creativity necessary to accomplish your particular goals. Because sometimes, matching a list or data point with what you're trying to do takes some creativity. For example, finding people who are readers of a certain publication who also meet the profile for what you're after takes an organization that really understand its lists.

DELIVER: What else can you do to improve your targeting and segmentation?

JOHN JANTSCH: The No. 1 way to improve those is to test. When I say that in my workshops, all the small business owners moan and groan and say that sounds like a lot of work and expense. But the businesses that get good at understanding and tracking their conversions and their lists — both online and off — and who are testing simple element over simple element will always outperform a company that has a giant budget and is just spraying stuff out there.

DELIVER: How should small businesses balance the integration of mail and digital channels?

JOHN JANTSCH: There's no one formula to strive for, because it depends on so many factors, from what industry you're in to what your objectives are. As you develop your lead generation plan, which is what

"I BELIEVE THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY FOR THE SMALLEST OF ORGANIZATIONS IS TO INTEGRATE SOCIAL MEDIA INTO WHAT THEY'RE ALREADY DOING IN THEIR MARKETING." — John Jantsch

people typically use direct mail for, make sure you have advertising, public relations and systematic generation of referrals built into that plan. Personalization and variable data options available today offer a tremendous opportunity to integrate the two and really engage prospects on a personal level — especially when you use mail to drive people online, like with a personalized landing page. Personalized URL technology is a fabulous use of direct mail because it allows you to not just put somebody's name in the marketing piece, but also create a personalized landing page for that prospect that you can then use to move him or her to get more information or become more involved with your product or service. You can engage your customers with a video or whatever else you might put on there, but the starter was that you got their attention through that traditional mail channel.

DELIVER: Is it important to diversify your marketing spend?

JOHN JANTSCH: Absolutely. I don't think any of these things should be looked at as 'I can do either this or that.' We're at a point where you need to do them all effectively. A lot of consultants say that, to build trust, people have to see your message numerous times. But I believe it's not just repetition. Instead of getting a mailer from you seven times, they need to be exposed to you in multiple ways: by going online, getting your direct mail pieces, by seeing your trucks and by hearing about you from someone in a social networking group.

DELIVER: How can small businesses keep up with and take advantage of these new platforms?

JOHN JANTSCH: Marketing fundamentals really haven't changed. You still have to build, know, like, trust, and offer value and generate leads from many sources. But now we have this rich tool set available to us, and I believe the biggest opportunity for the smallest of organizations is to integrate social media into what they're already doing in their marketing.

DELIVER: Where should they start?

JOHN JANTSCH: You can't just go to a social networking site, open up a fan page and say 'come on down.' At the very least, you can take your customer database, your hottest prospects, and give them to a service that will append your data with social media in the same way they do with geographic or demographic data. These services can tell you which of your customers use the varied array of social networks. That's valuable information, because it has always been difficult for small businesses to get very deep psychographic information. But today, people are online telling you everything they want, everything they're missing, the products they need and what frustrates them. It's incredible the amount of research you can gain in a way that really allows you to use that insight to start informing your messages and start informing how you might target people who have a lot of those same thoughts and questions. That insight is very useful in fostering loyalty among those customers, too.

DELIVER: Can small businesses compete with major marketers in this realm?

JOHN JANTSCH: It can be effective for both, sure, but the mistake a lot of small businesses make is they think they can have the same result as another company or brand just because they're marketing on the same platform. They might hear about a promotion done on a social networking site and say, 'Oh look, they ran this campaign, had a coupon and did all this other stuff and they got all this conversion, so we should do that, too.' But chances are that campaign was for a company with a strong, well-recognized, trusted brand. It's like everything else in marketing: You have to build your brand before you can expect to have any kind of conversion in any media that you use, no matter what the platform. **■**