

big things, small packages

Fold-out Z-CARD®s let you offer lots of info in a small space

It's a classic struggle in marketing: how to get across as much information as possible with the smallest possible footprint.

Marci Schoenmaker knows that challenge well. As marketing manager of the "Show Your Card & Save®" program for the Washington and northern Idaho region of AAA, Schoenmaker kept hearing from members that they couldn't remember which businesses offer discounts to membership cardholders.

"We have more than 100 partners that offer discounts to AAA members," she says. "Members can go to the Web site or look at a directory or the member magazine, but we wanted a creative piece that's not bulky like a magazine so members can carry it as a reminder."

Enter Z-CARDS. Invented by a British travel writer who noticed that business travelers had passports with fold-out inserts to hold all their entry stamps, Z-CARDS are folded paper inserts bound between two small covers. Pull the two covers apart and the insert unfolds to a full sheet of information.

Z-CARDS come in a range of sizes, but the smallest option has credit card-sized covers and folds out to about 8" x 9". The convenient size of the cards, when folded, lets customers carry a lot of information in their pockets, wallets or purses. Z-CARDS can be mailed in an envelope, inserted into a specially designed self-mailer or sealed as self-mailers on their own. And Z-CARDS are something that consumers tend to hang on to, partly because of the novelty, but also because of the amount of information contained in their compact size.

In May 2006, Schoenmaker mailed credit card-sized Z-CARDS inside self-mailers to 13,000 members whose memberships were up for renewal in late 2006. The Z-CARDS open up to a 9-1/2" x 11-1/2" sheet and contain a listing of the Show Your Card & Save partners offering

deals to AAA members. Members are directed to a toll-free number or a Web site for more information on these partners. Schoenmaker also had 3,000 stand-alone Z-CARDS printed and distributed as take-ones to AAA Washington's 24 area walk-in service centers.

The thickness and weight of a direct mail piece with one of these cards inside, its makers say, entice readers to open the direct mail piece to see what's inside. But imaginative creative also helps. The AAA Washington creative team designed a self-mailer that they hoped would entice recipients to check inside with the teaser, "What's even better than being you?" The inside of the mailer reads: "Saving money for being you," and gives details on the Z-CARD, which is attached to the mailer with special glue that releases easily.

Schoenmaker says the cards have been a hit: "We saw an immediate increase in click-throughs to the various partners' pages on the Web site the month after the mailing, which is good for such a small run, and we had a spike in calls to the fulfillment center asking for a directory." Employees at the service centers report that walk-in members love the Z-CARDS, particularly because they offer a convenient way to keep valuable information at hand. Says Schoenmaker, "It's a lot of information in a very small space, and it gives a nice 3-D sense of 'newness' to a piece." ✉

