



Of the 60,000 West Marine customers targeted for the mailing, half received one with their first name spelled out in the sand.

**INTRODUCTION**

West Marine Inc. is the nation's largest specialty retailer of boating supplies and apparel, with 383 stores and more than \$680 million in annual sales. The company's catalog and Internet channels offer customers access to almost 50,000 products along with the convenience of being able to exchange catalog and Internet purchases at its retail stores.

**CHALLENGE**

The company was looking to boost sales during the Christmas holiday season. Because this was typically a difficult time for boat accessory sales, it would need a direct mail piece with real impact to generate traffic at retail locations.

West Marine was intrigued with the idea of using variable data to customize messages to individual customers. However, it wanted to test its effectiveness compared to a like mailer with static messaging.

**SOLUTION**

To facilitate a side-by-side comparison, Trekk developed a postcard mailer that would accommodate both customized and generic messages and graphics. The final design pictured a deserted island with S-O-S written in the sand. For the variable version, the recipient's name was spelled out.

Messaging positioned the retailer as the hero: "Need a little help with your last minute shopping? West Marine to the Rescue! Both versions offered \$20 off any purchase of \$100 or more when they shopped between December 16th and December 24th.

A secondary offer on the back of the card enticed recipients with the possibility of winning one of three PDAs with GPS. The variable mailers incorporated a map directing recipients from their home address to the nearest West Marine retail location.

Postcards were mailed to 60,000 existing customers enrolled in the West Advantage rewards program. Half received customized mailers, while the remaining 30,000 received a generic version. A UPC code, tied to West Marine's point-of-sale system, allowed the company to track sales generated from the campaign.

**RESULTS**

Both of the mailers achieved outstanding results, which was attributed to the unique creative presentation. The static version of the postcard received an impressive 11 percent response rate, compared to the 2 or 3 percent the company's direct mail efforts typically garnered.

Response to the variable version was 14 percent. In addition, customers who redeemed the variable mailer spent (more than twice as much) as those who redeemed the generic version. The test proved invaluable to marketers at West Marine, who are now convinced that variable data marketing will complement the company's business model.

**YOU MAY HAVE JUST WON...**  
Three members have been selected, and one of these might be YOU!  
Navigate your way to any West Marine store between December 16th - 24th and present this card. If your member number matches our pre-selected number, you win a FREE! \$549.99 Value and it could be yours FREE!

**The Garmin iQue 3600**  
Features:  
• Powered by Palm OS 5  
• Integrated GPS and navigation software  
• Built-in module for address-book, calendar, MP3 player, and message playback  
• Voice recorder for making notes, track notes, and messages  
• Navigation system: Lithium ion battery  
• 32 MB of onboard memory  
• 2.8" W x 5.7" H x .8" D  
• High resolution: 262,000 pixels

**Psst..**  
Just follow store location Seekonk voyage.

Customized maps were dynamically drawn for 30,000 individuals, directing them to the nearest retail location from a database of hundreds.

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