



An **Axia Marketing** White Paper

Axia Marketing
204 Kent Way
West Reading, PA 19611
610-376-0635
www.axia-marketing.com

Leveraging e.Fulfillment

By Wendy Kershner, Principal

Contents

- 3 Introduction**
 - 3 Fulfillment basics**
 - 3 Shifting to e.Fulfillment**
 - 3 Delivery applications**
 - 5 Cost savings**
 - 5 Other opportunities**
 - 5 Summary and next steps**
-

Introduction

Fulfillment basics

Shifting to e.Fulfillment

- **Benefits to companies**
- **Benefits to clients, customers and prospects**

Delivery applications

- **Permission-based marketing**
- **PDF files and “webification”**

Cost savings

Other opportunities

Summary and next steps

Leveraging e.Fulfillment

Most companies have some sort of fulfillment component to their business, usually shipping out actual goods and/or marketing materials. But many people don't realize that they can use electronic options such as their web site and e-mailing as fulfillment tools to supplement or replace their traditional fulfillment. This white paper provides an overview of the basics of e.Fulfillment and how you can leverage this electronic channel to not only save money but enhance your relationships with your constituents.

Fulfillment basics

"Fulfillment" is simply sending requested information, materials and goods to customers and potential buyers. For example, if you order a coat from a catalog—either over the phone or online—that company "fulfills" your purchase order by shipping that coat to you. Another example is requesting a brochure about walking tours in Europe, and the company mails you their latest catalog with scheduled tours. In the first example, you've bought something, and you're charged for the shipping costs (or they're included in the item price.) In the second example, you're just thinking about going on a tour, and the cost to produce the brochure and mail it to you is a marketing expense for that company. You may or may not decide to take a tour with that particular company, and so that organization always needs to monitor and minimize those marketing costs.

Shifting to e.Fulfillment

"e.Fulfillment" is sending requested information—like the walking tour brochure—electronically instead of mailing printing materials. This type of fulfillment is increasingly attractive for both organizations and customers.

The benefits to companies are:

- quicker delivery of information,
- greatly reduced delivery costs (printing and postage), and
- an opportunity to convey related information and offer enhanced experiences such as virtual tours online.

The benefits to clients, customers and prospects are:

- quicker receipt of information,
- personalized and customized service, and
- additional information as well as related offerings and services.

And although e.Fulfillment sounds fairly straightforward, there are a number of factors to be considered.

Delivery applications

There are three basic situations in which a company can use electronic fulfillment. The first is receiving a request through a customer-initiated phone call. Instead of mailing information, you can offer to send them the information

electronically. This starts the process of engaging them to interact with you in a new way. The second is receiving a request from a customer through your web site. As you're already in an electronic channel, trying to keep the dialogue there is your goal. And the third is "pushing out" value-added information and offers to customers and prospects who have given you permission to contact them.

Permission-based marketing

The focus of dialoguing with your constituents—on any level—is relationship building. So permission-based marketing is at the heart of e.Fulfillment. Federal legislation requires companies to allow consumers to "opt-out" of receiving unwanted communications. And best practices focus on communications to clients and prospects that have "opted in" to receive your materials. By always being respectful of their time and preferences, your customers and prospects will tend to look favorably on you and your brand. And this means that you have accomplished the first step in establishing a relationship. This is the true goal of e.Fulfillment—to transform an interest or inquiry into an introduction to your company through electronic channels and establish an e.Relationship.

PDF files and "webification"

Organizations have three options to electronically fulfill requests. First, electronic files of materials, or PDFs, can be sent as e-mail attachments. The documents can be read by the recipients either on the computer screen or printed out. Second, e-mails can be sent with links to the PDF files on your web site, and the documents can be read online or printed out. Third, e-mails can be sent with links to specific areas on your web site where the information resides.

In the first two instances, PDFs are used. A PDF is a Portable Document Format, a representation of a two-dimensional document created with proprietary software from Adobe Systems. When using PDFs online, it's critical to provide user-friendly versions of your printed materials. User-friendly versions are electronic files that are quick to download and easy to read online. Often large graphics are removed or reduced, and the content is offered in sections as opposed to pages. The layout or "look" is less important than the clarity of the content. So this means that you need to create communications specifically written and designed for online reading in addition to creating traditional print versions.

In an electronic environment, readers tend to quickly review short "chunks" of information. They literally jump around, clicking related items for additional information as interested, and they are often focused on speed. An online user definitely doesn't want to read a brochure page by page online the way that you would read an actual printed brochure. Unlike traditional print where information is presented in a controlled and orderly fashion, online information is accessed according to the each individual's

needs. The user needs to have the ability to drill down for more details—or not—as they desire. This means that they are customizing the information for themselves, and your role is to give them different paths for learning. This “webification” of your communications shows that you are embracing the electronic environment and adjusting your communications based on the channel. And more importantly you are respecting your constituents and allowing them to engage with you on their own terms.

Cost savings

Reducing traditional costs of printing and distributing materials are the most obvious cost savings. e.Fulfillment practices can allow you to reduce the number of pieces you physically send out which means lower print volumes and postage expenses. It also means that your traditional fulfillment and inventory fees will be reduced, and less unused materials will be destroyed

Another cost savings is reduced phone calls. Assuming your company web site is robust and user-friendly, your customers and prospects can access the information they need on their own. So potentially when they call you it's to clarify details and/or finalize a purchase.

Other opportunities

Beyond the cost savings, the technology allows you to assist customers in new ways as well as directly show prospects the value of your products or services. This may include:

- pushing out related information, timely updates and industry news;
- providing personalized information based on individual needs—specific links allow you to customize the information you send out instead of mailing a one-size-fits all brochure;
- providing a different kind of customer service experience such as talking though a question on the phone while the prospect and customer rep simultaneously look at a web site section;
- verbally walking a customer or prospect through your web site, essentially giving a personal tour and doing some hand-holding to help them navigate the site so they become more comfortable with exploring and accessing information on their own.

Summary and Next Steps

e.Fulfillment can be a terrific tool to compliment existing marketing activities. It can help you and your company become easier to do business with. It can allow you to take a more personalized and customized approach to your marketing. It can help you develop an on-going proactive relationship with your constituents. It's a green solution and can help you reduce waste. And it can even save you money.

Next Steps:

1. Review your mechanisms for opting in/opting out
2. Compare your current costs—printing of various pieces, storage, traditional pic 'n pac fulfillment, postage—to the cost of e-mails (typically less than \$.01)
3. Establish an internal system to easily send batches of e-mails, monitor and track delivery, and resolve problems with bad url addresses
4. Review your legal requirements, i.e. potential need for a legal receipt of required documents
5. Testing: establish a pilot, collect feedback, map out a rollout and collect on-going feedback

Axia Marketing works with organizations who want to re-imagine and streamline their marketing efforts. We balance left brain and right brain thinking, and our specialty is that we both “think and do.” We help our clients think through their needs and then assist them in moving forward in new and sometimes unexpected ways. We’ll help you take a fresh look at your marketing and the way you do business. Please contact Wendy Kershner for further information at Axia Marketing, 610-376-0635, wkershner@axia-marketing.com