

THE TIMES MAILED

RSVP CARDS

TO CONVERT

TRIALISTS TO

PAYING MEMBERS

THE  TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES



Royal Mail

MarketReach

BACKGROUND

At £1 for 30 days, The Times+ membership trial offer was successful at bringing customers in. However research showed that many customers didn't subsequently convert as they felt the jump in price, to £26 a month once the offer finished, wasn't worth paying.

The Times set out to inspire customers to remain members by showcasing the exclusive Times+ events and content that was only available with membership.

SOLUTION

The idea was simple and charming: The Times sent out a selection of beautifully designed RSVP cards – each of which displayed a calligraphic apology; the message being ‘you’re about to be so busy you’ll have to say sorry to your friends for not being able to see them’. The cards would allow the potential member to get out of social fixtures they didn’t want to attend, and also showcase to their friends their higher social status because they were attending highbrow events – a private view at the Tate, for example – with The Times and The Sunday Times. Each card let the reader discover a different event open to them; one where tickets were held back to ensure nobody experienced disappointment.

The mailed cards were designed for actual use; boxes were placed next to each event for the potential member to write their friends’ addresses and even a personal message. And, for true authenticity, the postcard included a place for a stamp. If used as such, the RSVP cards had the additional benefit of spreading awareness of the exclusivity of membership amongst family and friends.

This simple ‘RSVP’ thought was also carried through into a follow-up email that reminded the customers of the sorry cards and linked them to compelling online content.

By combining multiple sources of data (cancellation reasons, engagement data, demographics), The Times built a propensity model to optimise targeting and timing for the campaign. The model scored all new customers as high, medium or low propensity to convert after the trial, with the greatest opportunity – and hence greatest investment – lying with the medium propensity group. Customers with a high propensity to convert (characterised by their high levels of engagement) were excluded as they already saw the value of membership at full price. Customers with a low propensity to convert were seen as a huge challenge, therefore only a small cell of these was included as a test.



The model also indicated that, with more time to use the product, the medium propensity group would see value in full price. So before sending out the RSVP cards, The Times applied a 3-month extension, at half price, to their trial.

The model further indicated that this group would be receptive to lifestyle content so, as a means of working The Times content into customer's lives they received an email 15 days after receiving the cards promoting exclusive food content and rewarding them with a Waitrose voucher. 30 days after the customer received a call to check how they were enjoying their membership.



RESULTS

The RSVP retention activity worked to engage trialists and prompt conversion to full price Times+ membership. Overall, the campaign resulted in a 6-12% uplift in 90 day conversion of the propensity groups when benchmarked against the control.

