



Understanding Acuity by RRDSM

How to Test Creative at a Fraction of the Cost and Time



INTRODUCTION

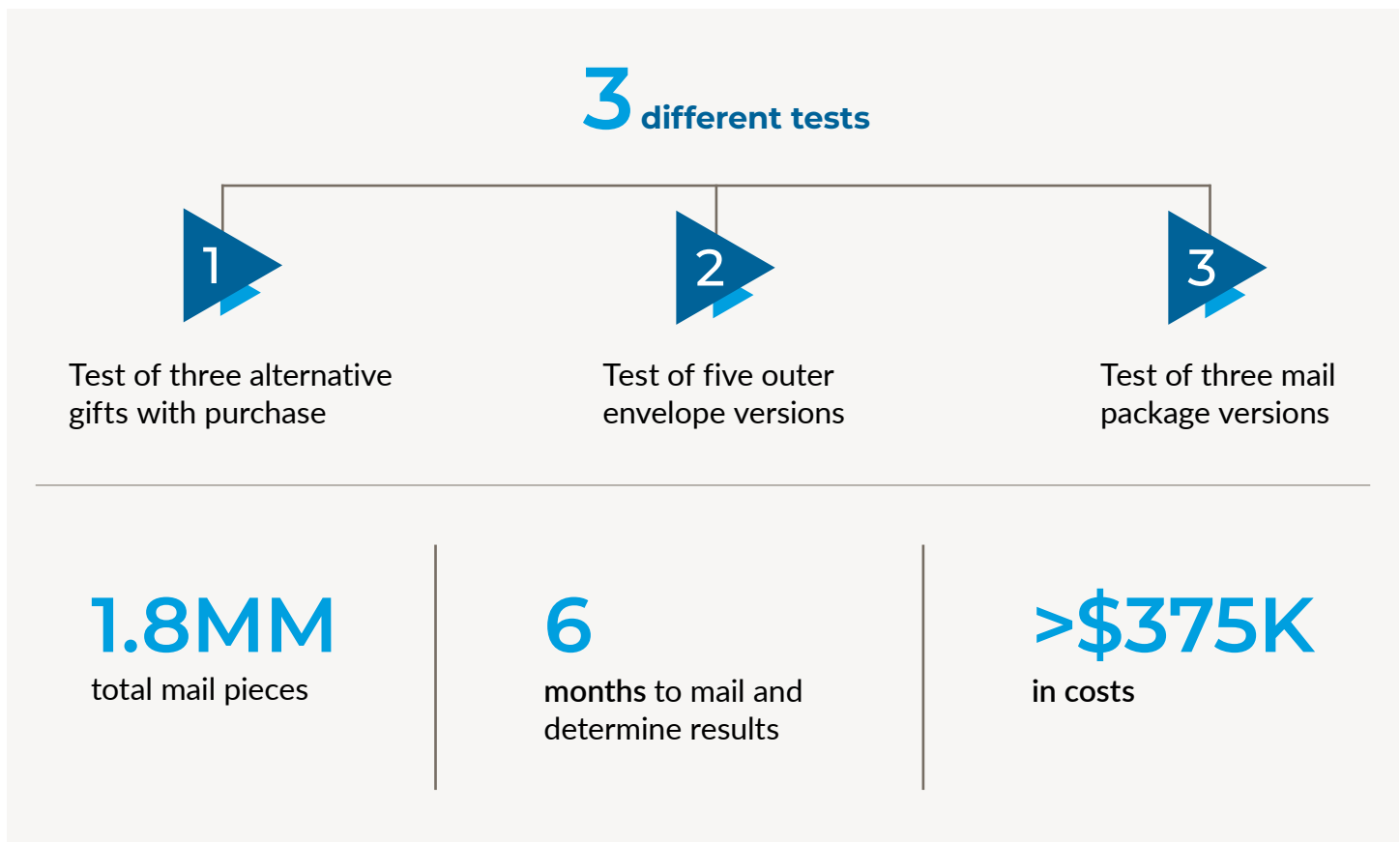
Improved response rates, along with reduced costs and time, are the calling cards of this insight-driven, virtual creative testing, and optimization solution.

You might be surprised how many companies launch creative that's based on little or no research. Decisions on competing creative elements — such as format, offers, gift premiums, copy, imagery, or color use — often come down to experience, assumptions, or possibly some brainstorming among co-workers, friends, or family.

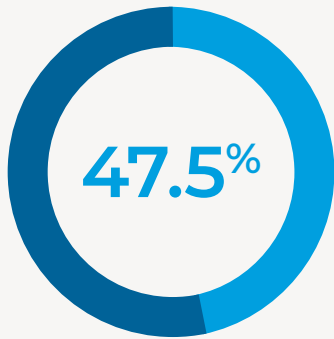
The time-honored way to test competing approaches for direct mail creative, for example, has typically involved implementing a test mailing. While this traditional approach provides answers as to which version performs best, it's also expensive, time-consuming, and potentially risky to your brand's reputation. In-market tests can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and take three to five months to deliver their results.

Case in point

We worked with a large nonprofit organization that has been extremely loyal to the traditional test mailing approach. Here's an example of some tests they launched — maybe you're doing something similar. The time and cost involved with this type of study are pretty typical of standard industry procedures. They're also unnecessary with Acuity by RRD.



PRE-LAUNCH RESEARCH



In a [TrackMaven marketing leadership survey](#),* nearly half (47.5%) of marketers consider themselves “data informed” yet use data “after-the-fact to find out what worked and what didn’t.” This is far from ideal.

One of the smartest ways to be data-informed is through pre-launch research. That’s why we’ve developed Acuity by RRD, a proprietary solution for testing creative marketing materials.

Acuity testing measures the cause, such as the direct mail creative and offer, and its effect — how recipients react to it. We do this by randomly assigning different creative executions — such as format, price, color, imagery, discounts versus rebates, and size — to individual respondents. These respondents are drawn from a population carefully matched to your target audience, making efficient use of small samples.

This leads to clear conclusions about:

- Which creative execution does the best and, therefore, offers the best chance for success when launched in the real world
- The most effective piece — whether digital or print — and its associated cost savings
- The type of person who responds to an offer
- What people like or dislike about an offer
- What motivates or fails to motivate a person’s behavior

This type of research can be applied to anything that seeks a response — direct mail, packaging, signage, labels, you name it. Acuity has proven itself to be a modestly priced creative testing solution capable of identifying which of several marketing appeals will generate the best return — and why.

In the nonprofit case study, it is no longer necessary to execute the direct mail test and track the results to determine what works best after the fact. Our Acuity data-first solution answers the question, “Is it possible to learn what to do without spending a huge amount of money?” with a resounding “Yes!”

And the nonprofit organization referred to earlier? Utilizing Acuity, we trimmed their testing timeline from six months to just a few weeks. And instead of mailing to 1.8 million recipients, we sampled fewer than 2,900 target audience members. Conservatively, we estimate this client could have saved \$300,000 if they had used Acuity instead of their standard test methods, plus five months of valuable time.

The results were the same:

The winners they identified in their standard tests were the winners we identified in our research.

*Trackmaven, “2017 Marketing Leadership Survey”

HOW IT WORKS

From eye-catching packaging to compelling direct mail pieces, signage, email, and other creative elements, Acuity is designed to analyze a wide range of creative marketing materials to precisely target your desired audience. In this particular case study, respondents are directed to the Acuity web portal, where the mail retrieval, sorting, and reviewing process is replicated online.

Respondents can manipulate the piece — look at the outer envelope, flip to the back, and come back to the front. They can also retrieve the contents within the mail package and review each one separately. They are also asked to respond to the copy and graphics on each piece and encouraged to provide comments throughout.

Whether you decide to test new vs. new executions, new vs. old, or current vs. new, there will be winners, losers, or ties — though the chances of a tie are greatly reduced if the sample size is large enough and the creative executions are truly distinct.

What do we look for? Any number of tried-and-true measures used in communications research, such as:

- Likelihood to open and read
- Likelihood to respond
- Purchase intent
- Understanding the point of the mail piece
- Understanding and interest in key messages
- Likability of the piece itself, or specific elements, such as format or offer
- Likelihood to show to or share with others

We'll often recommend that two or three versions be tested at a time, which is enough for most situations. There are times, however, when your needs include testing more versions, and Acuity can handle that as well.

In addition to winners and losers, the test provides a profile of those who liked each piece the most, and identifies specific elements to accentuate or perhaps eliminate. These additional benefits are not available using a traditional in-market research approach. Acuity allows you to not only pick the winner but to also improve the winning creative and fine-tune your targeting.



POSITIVE ROI VS. AN EVEN MORE POSITIVE ROI

If you can get testing results — and insights to improve your final mail package — about three times faster and at a fraction of the cost, would it be worth a try? Imagine knowing exactly how your creative marketing materials will resonate with your audience before you launch them. No more crossed fingers, squandered time, and wasted budgets. With Acuity by RRD, you can unlock the secrets of powerful creative materials in less time and at a much lower cost.

Ready to improve the results of your creative materials while saving time and money?

Visit RRD.com/Acuity

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Mark Traylor has been working in marketing research for over 35 years. He is the founder and former president of National Market Measures, LLC – now a part of MarketVision Research.

His research expertise includes focus group moderation, survey and experimental research design, and multivariate statistics. He also consults with clients in market segmentation, concept testing, branding, new product development, pricing, and competitive marketing strategies.

A former university professor, Mark has written articles for a number of peer-reviewed marketing, research, and advertising journals, including the Journal of Marketing Research, the Journal of Advertising Research, the Journal of Advertising, Psychology & Marketing, and the Journal of Consumer Marketing. He has also served as a consultant and expert witness in cases of deceptive promotion, trademark infringement, and patent design infringement.

ABOUT RRD

From concept to analysis, RRD is well-positioned to handle the entire cycle of insight-driven optimization, ensuring your creative elements are successful on every level.

- Creative development and refinement
- Pre-launch testing using Acuity
- Traditional A/B testing
- Conversion reporting and analysis

With unparalleled depth in virtual creative testing and management, we've developed breakthrough production efficiencies, automated processing, and customization technology. Our expertise and scale allow us to effectively communicate with impact to an audience of any size.

Test your creative materials virtually at a fraction of the cost and time.
Visit RRD.com/Acuity

