eM
EBSCO MEDIA

The Power of pURLs
Why personal URLs (pURLs) may be the most potent marketing tool since mail first got direct

Direct mail has long been recognized as one of the most effective means of advertising, delivering some of the highest response rates. Still, it's not without faults. It can be slow... bulk mail can take two to three weeks to deliver and business reply mail can add even more time to that. Success is often difficult to track. Was that upsurge in web traffic a result of your mailing or merely coincidence? And why would anyone in their right mind consider a 1% response a success? Aren't we better than that?

Fortunately for the frustrated marketer, technological advances are making whole new ways of talking (and listening) to prospects possible. Enter variable digital printing and personal URLs.

Direct Mail + Internet = A Whole New Ball Game
You've heard the expression "the sum is greater than the parts." That's what happens when you combine direct mail advertising with the internet. Together they can do so much more than they can alone. But it takes a couple of unseen forces to bind them together and compound their power. Those forces are "variable digital printing" and "personal URLs."

White Paper

Truly Stellar Direct Mail

What on the surface appears to be a nice birthday greeting from a cell phone company to its customers is in fact a stealth marketing machine—all thanks to variable digital printing.

Discount amount is automatically increased for Stellar Club members.

Sandra,

We're giving you 20% off each call you make on your birthday, so take the time to call someone you love...

To you from

StarCom

Stellar Club

StarCom inc.
First Freedom Ave
New York, NY 10010

SANDRA SMITH
29 PINE RIDGE RD
APT 9C
BRIDGEPORT, CT 11743

XM PIE This postcard was produced using XMPie®
uDirect™ variable-data publishing software and
Adobe® InDesign®.

A Stellar Club logo appears only on cards mailing to Stellar Club members.

The customer's name appears in several places and in various formats throughout the piece.

The background art of the piece changes on the fly to complement the color of the phone pictured.

The product image matches the exact model and color owned by the recipient.

Happy Birthday
Sandra

StarCom would like to wish you all the stars in the sky for your birthday.

Activate e-mail service and get 1 month free!

Happy B-Day
Sandra

StarCom

For more information please access your home page at:
http://www.starcom.com/sandra.smith

A personalized URL is printed on the piece, encouraging the recipient to go to their personal website for more information.

A message encouraging the recipient to begin using a service she has not yet activated appears on the card. If all available services have already been activated, the message disappears altogether.

What is Variable Digital Printing?

Let's consider variable printing first, as it was the earlier technological wonder to hit the marketing scene. In its infancy, variable printing was primitive. It was the electronic magic that allowed every adult in America with a mailing address to believe that they had just won ONE MILLION DOLLARS. The lucky recipient's name was featured in huge, bold (black) type at the beginning of an otherwise boilerplate offer for magazines. It was a simple yet brilliant-for-its-time use of personalization. Thankfully, those days are gone forever.

Today variable printing allows us to use any data associated with a record on a mailing list to vary not just names, but whole sections of text, graphics, photos, offers, incentives...essentially anything that can be printed on the page (in black and white and full color)...by printing digitally. ***Digital printing allows you to make every single piece of a print run unique,*** so that the direct mail piece speaks directly to the recipient.

One of the items that can be unique on a direct mail piece is (you guessed it)... a personal URL.

What are personal URLs?

Personal URLs are web addresses that take invited guests to personalized landing pages (sometimes called microsites) for unique online experiences. Their construction is typically some variation of a person's name plus a general domain address.

> *Examples:*
>
> **Bill Gates** would be invited to go to www.**BillGates**.domain.com
>
> **Eleanor Roosevelt** would be invited to to to www.**EleanorRoosevelt**.domain.com
>
> **Bart Simpson** would be invited to go to www.**BartSimpson**.domain.com

Including a person's name in a URL creates instant curiosity — who among us wouldn't be tempted to find out just what resides at our very own web site? Having the name appear to the left of the domain increases the likelihood that it will be seen. The domain part of the pURL can be any valid web address (though it should not be your regular corporate web address because the pURL will be pointed to special servers that manage pURL campaigns).

As the structure of a pURL might suggest, the main thrust of these web sites (the domain) is the same; however, nuances of their content are tailored to better appeal to each known visitor. Why go to the trouble? Because Bill Gates is not Eleanor Roosevelt, and neither of them is Bart Simpson. We need to speak to each person a little differently if we want to be more effective. To do *that,* we need to send each person to a slightly different web site.

Pushing the pURL
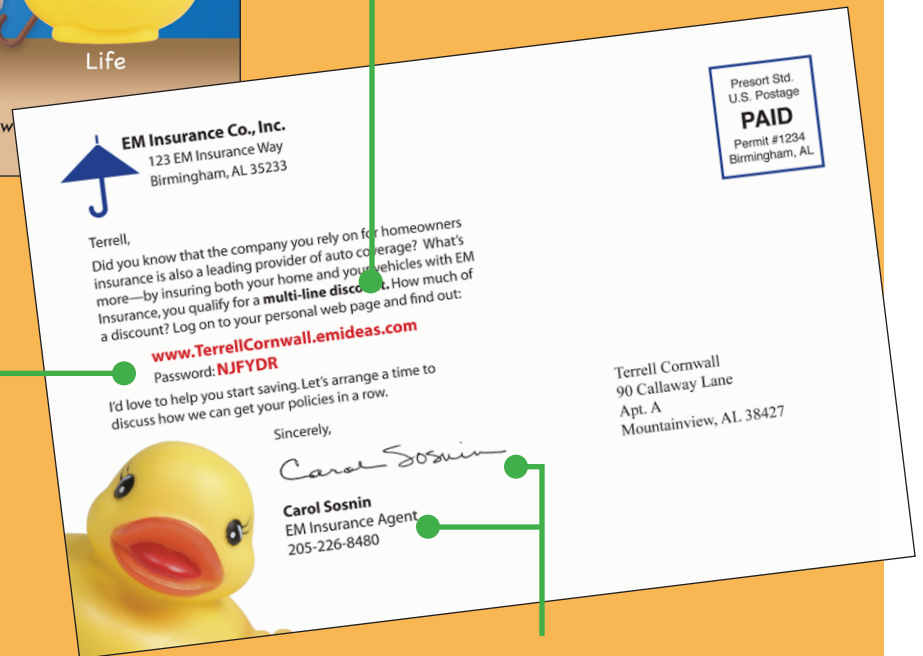*The recipient's pURL is prominently featured to ensure attention.*

Starting the Cycle

A direct mail piece featuring a recipient's personal URL serves as stage one of a pURL marketing campaign.

How much could the **Cornwall Family** save by getting their policies in a row?

Home   Auto   Life

Find out at:
www.TerrellCornwall.emideas.com   Passw
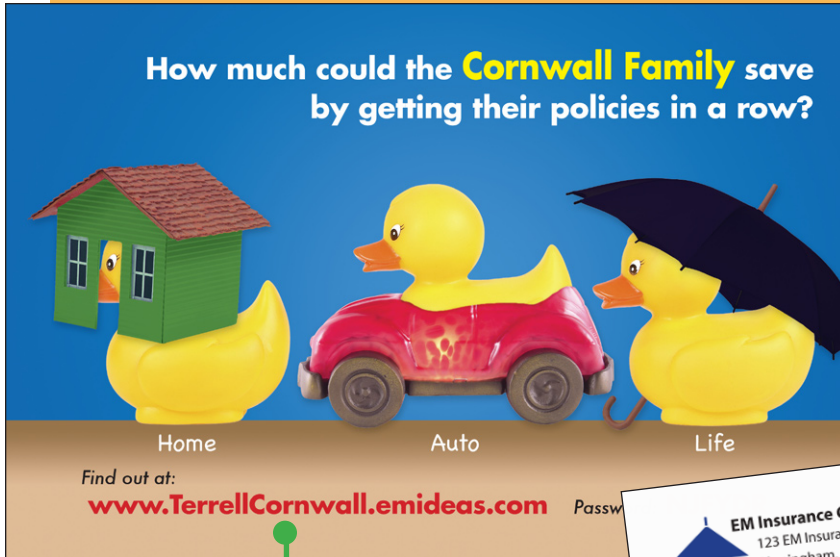
A discount is offered as an incentive for the recipient to go online. Offering the right incentive is key to moving the prospect along in the process.

The recipient's pURL is featured on both the front and back of this piece to ensure that it is seen by the recipient.

EM Insurance Co., Inc.
123 EM Insurance Way
Birmingham, AL 35233

Presort Std.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #1234
Birmingham, AL

Terrell,
Did you know that the company you rely on for homeowners insurance is also a leading provider of auto coverage? What's more—by insuring both your home and your vehicles with EM Insurance, you qualify for a **multi-line discount.** How much of a discount? Log on to your personal web page and find out:

www.TerrellCornwall.emideas.com
Password: **NJFYDR**

I'd love to help you start saving. Let's arrange a time to discuss how we can get your policies in a row.

Sincerely,

Carol Sosnin

Carol Sosnin
EM Insurance Agent
205-226-8480

Terrell Cornwall
90 Callaway Lane
Apt. A
Mountainview, AL 38427

For added credibility, the direct mail piece comes from the recipient's existing insurance agent. The agent's contact info and signature personalize the piece while offering an alternative response channel.

Connecting Direct Mail to the Internet

How do you bind the two media—mail and Internet? By driving an individual to a personal web site with a direct mail piece that features a personal URL along with a call to action to visit the pURL (for additional information, a freemium, the chance to participate in a survey or contest... whatever is appropriate for the marketing campaign at hand). Sure, prospects can still respond to an 800 number on the direct mail piece...you are not cutting off other response channels. However, you will strongly prefer that they go to their pURL, because doing so opens up whole new marketing opportunities.
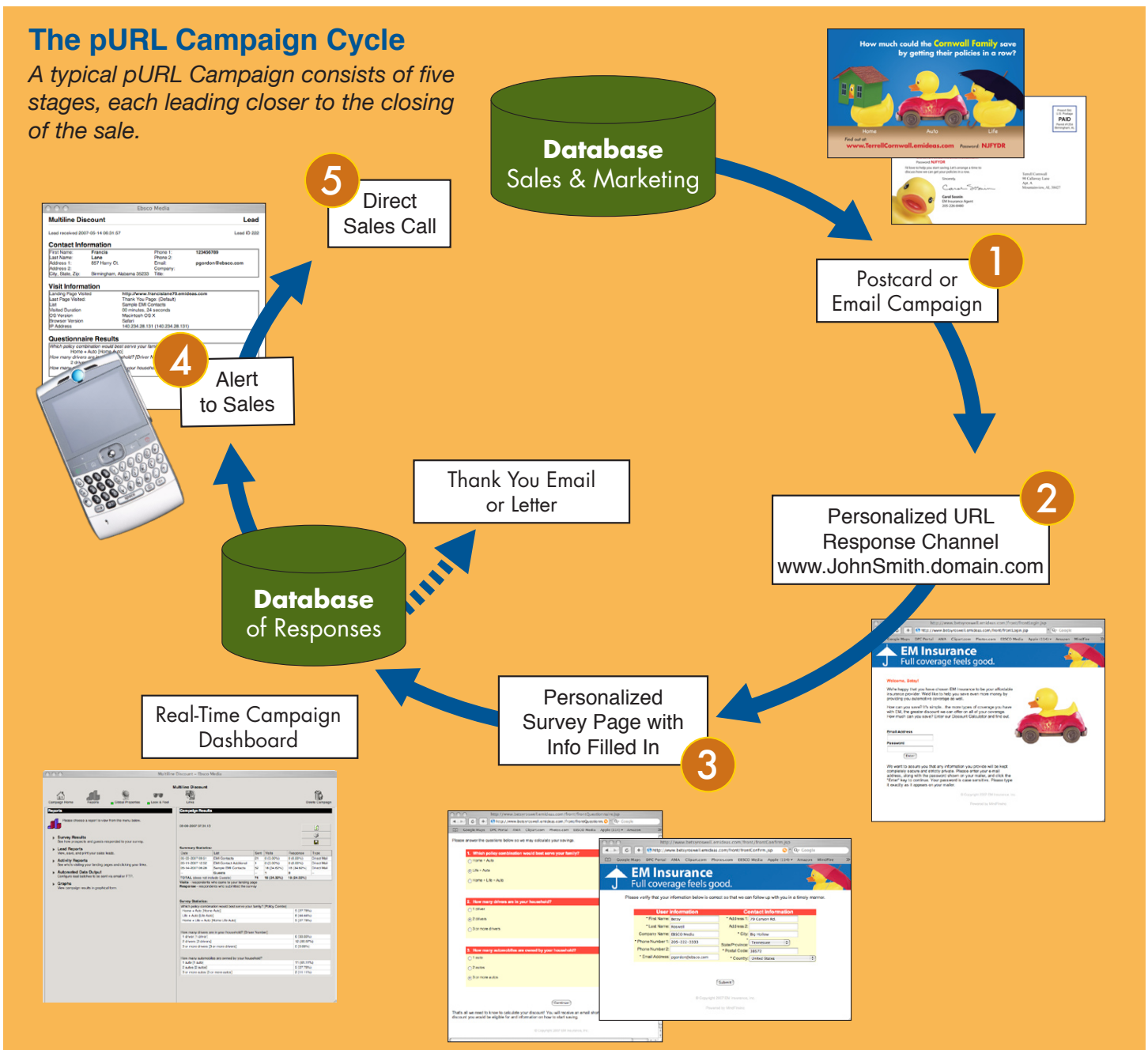
Closing the Loop

A pURL visit sets in motion a series of events that enables Sales to respond faster to leads and Marketing to accurately measure the success of campaigns, in real time.

The steps in the pURL process are:

1. You publish the personal URL on a direct mail piece and mail it out. The direct mail piece invites the recipient to visit his personal web site to learn more about your offer.
2. Once online, the prospect interacts with the web site.
3. All information contributed by your visitor is captured in a database, which you as the campaign manager can access in real time.
4. Leads are automatically sent to Sales for immediate follow-up.
5. Sales can pick up the phone to complete the sale while the prospect is still hot.

The pURL Campaign Cycle

A typical pURL Campaign consists of five stages, each leading closer to the closing of the sale.

- **Database** — Sales & Marketing
- 1 — Postcard or Email Campaign
- 2 — Personalized URL Response Channel www.JohnSmith.domain.com
- 3 — Personalized Survey Page with Info Filled In
- Thank You Email or Letter
- **Database** of Responses
- Real-Time Campaign Dashboard
- 4 — Alert to Sales
- 5 — Direct Sales Call

Welcome to Your Online Experience

What happens when you sit down at your computer and key in your personal URL? The first thing you see is a welcome page, which has the same look and feel as the direct mail piece that inspired your visit. Maintaining an aesthetic across the different media keeps a campaign cohesive and assures visitors that they have arrived at the right location on the web.

You also notice that the welcome page is greeting you by name (Welcome, John!...Greetings, Mary!..Susan, we need your input.) That's the beauty of *inviting* someone to a web site: when you expect a visitor, you can plan ahead. It gives you the ability to put all of your existing knowledge about that person to work as you craft their online experience.

Welcome pages can be configured differently based upon the needs of a campaign. For example, visitors might be asked to key in their e-mail address to enter their site. This is a very natural, unobtrusive way to collect e-mail addresses for future marketing efforts. Or visitors might be asked to enter a "password" for an added sense of security (or a "special value code" for a feeling of exclusivity...it's all in the spin that you put on it).

Whatever the details, the goal of every Welcome Page is to get the online visitor to enter the site for further interaction.

The Welcome Page

The first page of a personalized microsite is the Welcome Page, which is designed to greet visitors and move them deeper into the site.

The look of the microsite mirrors that of the direct mail piece that directed visitors here, assuring them that they have come to the right place.

Visitors are greeted by name.

You can version the message on the welcome page to reflect the particular demographics of each of your visitors.
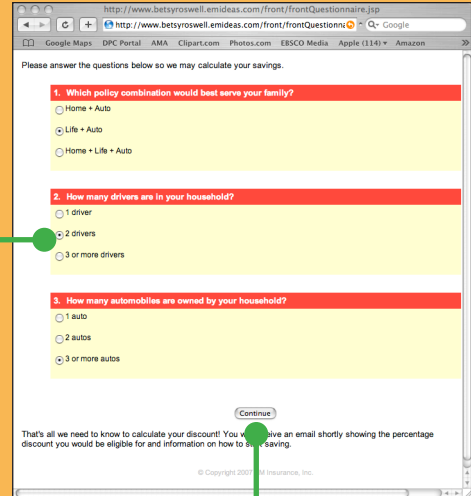
You can request that visitors enter their email address and/or a password to gain access to the rest of their site.
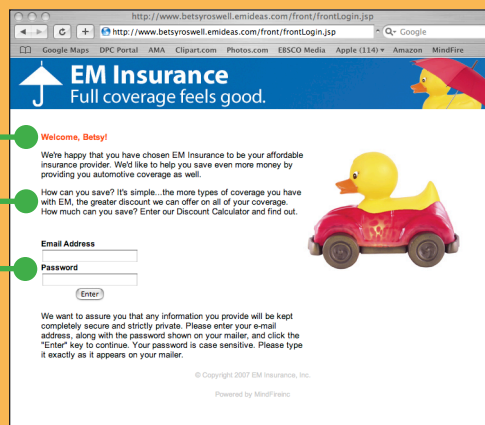
The Survey Page

The second page of a personalized microsite is the Survey Page. Here you can ask visitors anything you'd like to know.

Questions can utilize radio buttons, check boxes, text fields, or paragraph fields.

Once your visitor clicks Submit, his answers are deposited in a database that you can download in spreadsheet format.

Can We Talk?

The second page of a personal microsite is the Survey Page. This is the part of the site that makes marketing people fairly giddy with ideas. On the survey page, you can ask your visitors anything you'd like to know. Think of those key pieces of information that would help Marketing target their efforts or Sales to cinch the deal.

Questions can be formatted with radio buttons (that restrict the visitor to a single answer in a list), check boxes (that allow for multiple selections from a list), text fields (for free form short responses), and paragraph fields (for long-winded answers). It's up to you whether visitors are required to answer a question or not.

All of the responses to your survey questions are recorded in a database for future analysis. We'll talk further about what you can do with the data in the section on Campaign Dashboards.

Finally, responses can be used to version subsequent pages in the personal microsite. This is powerful. Versioning lends your sites a conversational quality that is personal and intriguing.

For example, question one on the Survey Page above asks the visitor to select which combination of insurance policies best fits his needs: Home + Auto, Life + Auto, or Home + Life + Auto. Each answer results in a progressively greater discount amount (8%, 10%, 12% respectively) that is reported to the visitor on the Thank You Page of his site. So by asking the question you are not only gaining valuable information to pass along to Sales, you are able to give appropriate responses to your visitor online.

Clean Up Your Data

The third page of a personal microsite is the Profile Page. Here visitors are shown their contact information and asked to fill in the blanks or correct erroneous data. This page gives *you* a rare opportunity to add precious phone numbers and e-mail addresses to your purchased mailing lists or clean up your own customer data.
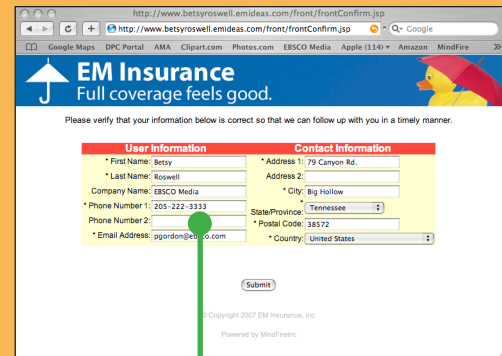
Thank You for Visiting

The fourth and final page of a personal microsite is the Thank You Page. As the name suggests, this is the time to thank your visitors for participating and let them know what follow-up actions you will be taking. The Thank You Page can be versioned based on anything you learned about your visitors from the Survey Page, making it a sophisticated topper to your online conversation.

In addition, the Thank You Page can be set to automatically redirect visitors to other web sites, including specific pages within those sites. How can you take advantage of this capability?

Well, let's assume you are a service provider. Consider how helpful a microsite would be that asks visitors on the Survey Page to select the service they are most interested in from a list of all the major services you offer. Not only could you reference their response in the copy of the Thank You Page (demonstrating that you heard them), you could then send them directly to the page of your corporate web site that focuses on the service they chose (to help them learn more). This is so much better than sending them to the your home page and hoping they figure it out from there.
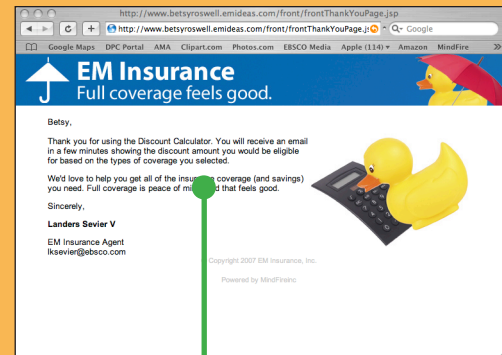
The Profile Page

The Profile Page gives you a chance to clean up and add to the data you currently have on your visitors.

Fields are pre-populated with any information already known about your visitor.

The Thank You Page

The Thank You pages finishes the online conversation.

Your copy can be versioned to reflect anything that you learned from your visitor on the Survey Page or demographics you held in your original mailing list.

The process does not end on the final page of the personal microsite. On the contrary, that is when things get most exciting for sales and marketing.

Automatic E-mail Responses

Automatically triggered e-mails can be sent to your visitors after their visit. No constant monitoring by some unfortunate member of your team required. Rather, you can establish rules telling the system to send specific e-mail types based on visitors' online behavior.

For example, an auto dealership that advertises a Buy-Back Sale via the pURL process could send an e-mail from the Used Car Team to visitors that indicated a preference for a used car and an e-mail from the New Car Team to those preferring a new car.

Automatic Emails
Follow-up emails are a nice touch. Now you can set them to deliver automatically.
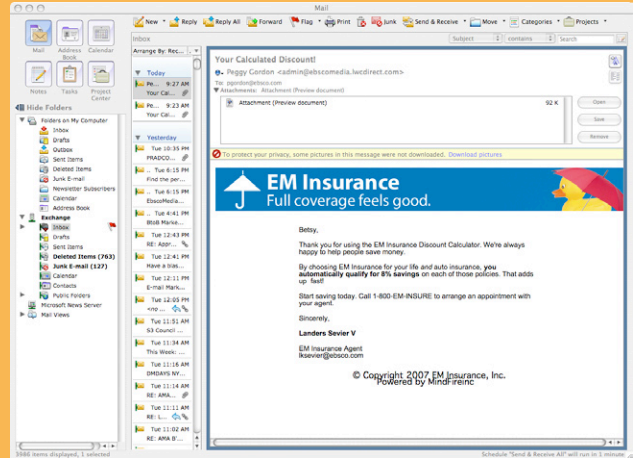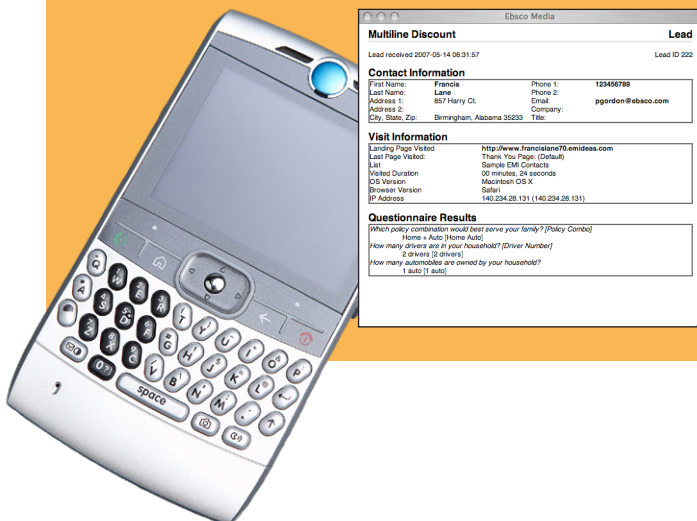

Automatic Lead Distribution

Automatic lead distribution is without a doubt the most exciting part of the pURL process. Here is where the rubber meets the road.

Automatic Leads
No delays. No confusion. Every lead is delivered via email to your team the moment a visitor leaves their personal microsite.

Now the instant a visitor leaves his site, all information about the visit is transmitted to your sales team via e-mail to their computer or PDA for immediate follow-up. They are told the visitor's name and contact information along with all of his responses to the online survey. No more cold calling. No more confusion over what a lead is in reference to.

Leads can be set up to funnel to the most appropriate member of your team. In the case of the auto dealership above, all *new car* leads could go to the new car sales manager while all *used car* leads could go to the used car sales manager. Direct delivery means no leads are delayed and no leads fall through the cracks.

9

The Campaign Dashboard

Have you always wanted to know how your marketing campaign is performing in real time? Now you can. By logging into the "Campaign Dashboard," whoever you designate as a campaign manager can access three types of reports: Survey Results, Lead Reports, and Activity Reports. These can be used to "fine tune" campaigns over time.

Survey Results

Survey Results shows how visitors responded to each of your survey questions. This is a great way to get a feel for market trends. You'll see a list of all questions and all possible answers from your Survey Page along with a tally of how many times each choice was selected during the campaign. Naturally, open-ended questions (those requiring text or paragraph responses) are not tallied.

Lead Reports

Lead Reports consists of batches of leads, which are collected daily. By clicking on any date in your campaign's life, you can page through every lead that arrived that day. This is a fantastic tool for managers that need to monitor follow-up by sales reps. You can review leads one by one, print a single lead, or print all of your leads for distribution to your sales team.

Leads can also be downloaded in spreadsheet format for further analysis. Each lead includes a respondent's Contact Information, Visit Information (like the amount of time they spent on the Landing Page, Operating System, Browser, and IP Address), and their Survey Results.

Activity Reports

Activity Reports shows how many times your landing pages were accessed and your links within the campaign were clicked, giving you real insight into the performance not only of your campaign as a whole, but individual pages of the campaign. For example, by viewing the Site Activity reports, you might detect a precipitous drop off in the number of visitors after the survey page, which could be an indication that you are asking too many or inappropriate questions. This knowledge in hand, you'll know better where to tweak the campaign for future runs.
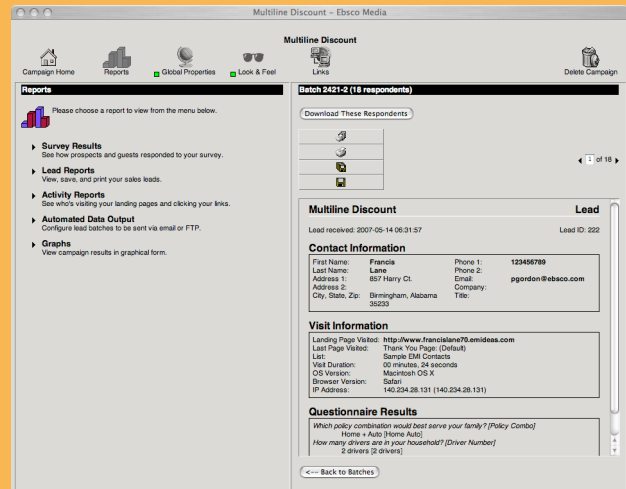
The Bottom Line: Better ROI

Digital printing and Internet advances have made it possible to send personalized direct mail to prospects inviting them to explore their very own personalized web sites. Engaging prospects in this manner gives marketers the ability to gain more information about their targets, craft their responses based on what they learn, automatically respond to requests via e-mail, instantly pass all information gained to Sales for follow-up action, and, most importantly, boost the ROI of their campaigns significantly. Since all information about these visits is collected in databases, meaningful reports can be generated to monitor the progress of campaigns in real-time. The result is a powerful new method of communicating marketing messages that delivers higher response rates and can be easily and accurately measured.

About EBSCO Media

In business more than sixty years, EBSCO Media is one of the largest sheet-fed commercial printers in the country. Digital printing services complement massive offset capacity to meet the demand for both long and short print runs. One-to-one marketing services are provided by a staff of experienced marketers. Programmers and designers make it possible for you to engage your customers and prospects with direct mail, personalization, customization, and personal URLs for quick, online response.

The ability to design, print, bind, fulfill and mail custom-printed pieces enables EBSCO Media to deliver a full-service printing experience to customers across the country. State-of-the-art electronic prepress, high-speed internet file transfer, computer-to-plate processing and online remote proofing complete the picture of a technologically savvy commercial printer.

For more information about EBSCO Media, visit www.ebscomedia.com.

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