

Bouncing Back: How Canada Post Re-energized Direct Mail for Advertisers

Client organization: Canada Post

Business need/opportunity

The world is changing, and Canada Post was experiencing a decline in the use of direct mail. It needed to promote DM as a valuable marketing tactic to marketers in Canada, to encourage them to use it more frequently as part of integrated campaigns, and, of course, to increase spend.

Intended audience

We targeted the advisors who influence these marketers: the strategists, account people and creative directors at Canada's leading advertising and marketing agencies.

Goals and objectives

Our research showed that direct mail suffers from negative perceptions within this (cynical) key audience. It's perceived as expensive, slow, tired and un-hip. To make matters worse, despite its reputation as a solid, trustworthy Canadian brand, Canada Post is also perceived as bureaucratic, rule-driven and unhelpful.

So we had two challenges:

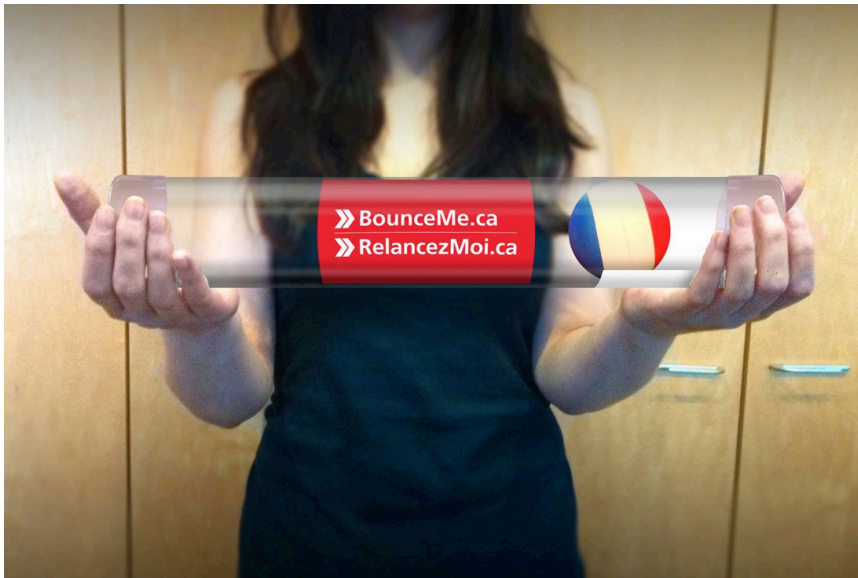
1. To inspire advertising agencies across Canada to recommend direct mail as part of the integrated communications strategies they develop for clients.
2. To re-position Canada Post – via its new “Agency Reps” – as a solution-finding partner

We created a two-part campaign. Phase 1 would demonstrate the potential of direct mail. Phase 2 is designed to open the door to conversation between Canada Post reps and agencies.

PHASE 1 – Solution overview

Given that we were promoting direct mail as a valuable marketing tool, we started with a direct mail piece for Phase 1. Given the cynicism of our 'been there, done that and seen everything' digital-leaning audience, we kept it simple, fun and unbranded.

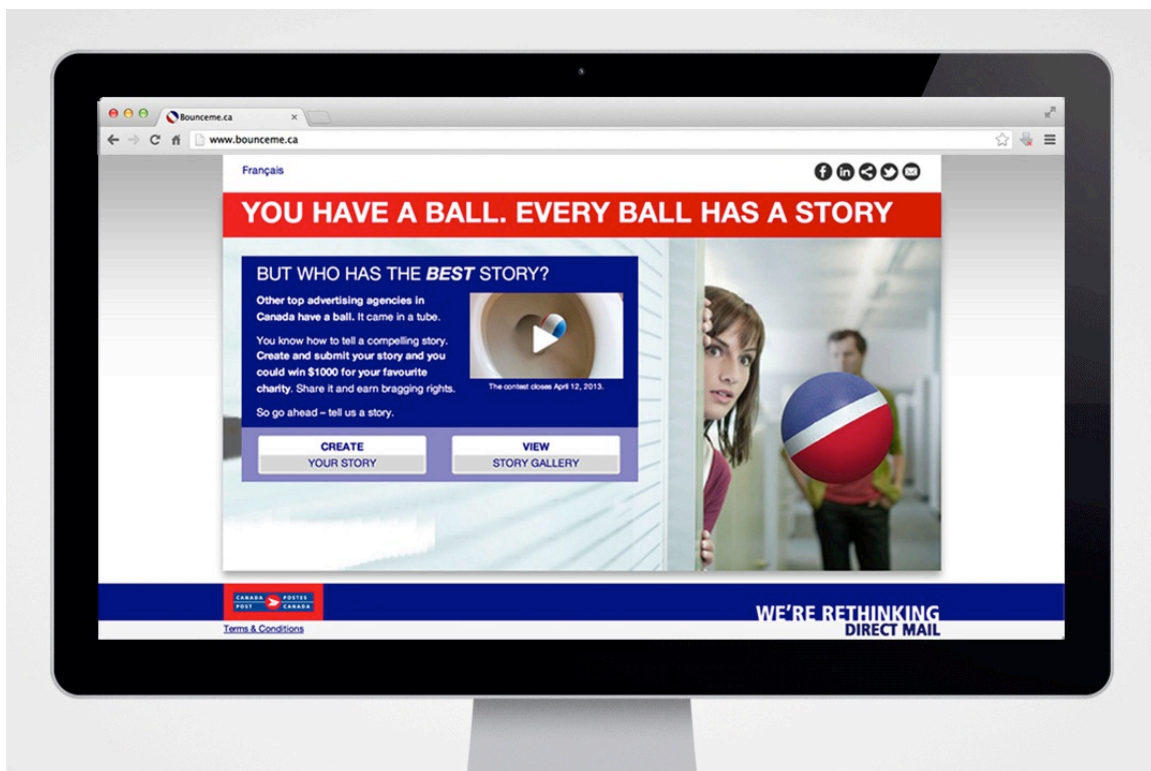
We sent them a ball. And asked them to play, for themselves and for charity.



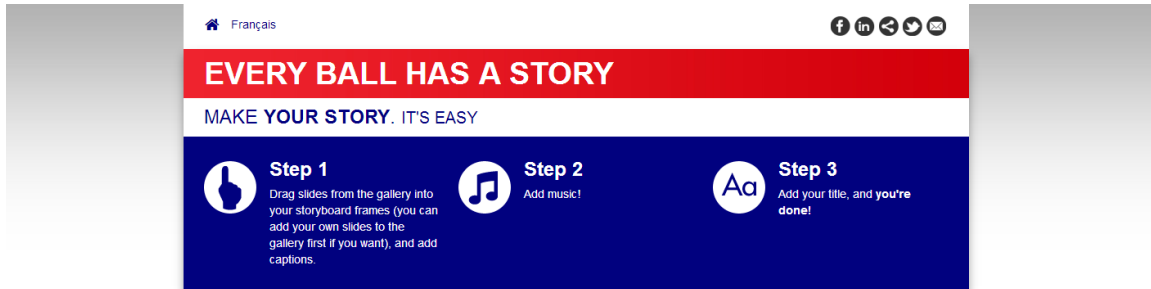
PHASE 1 – Implementation and challenges

Our DM offered a ball in a tube, and a URL. BounceMe.ca. We didn't actually ask them to do anything.

However, if they *did* do *something* (follow the URL), they found themselves on a site offering them a chance to play, and a chance to give.



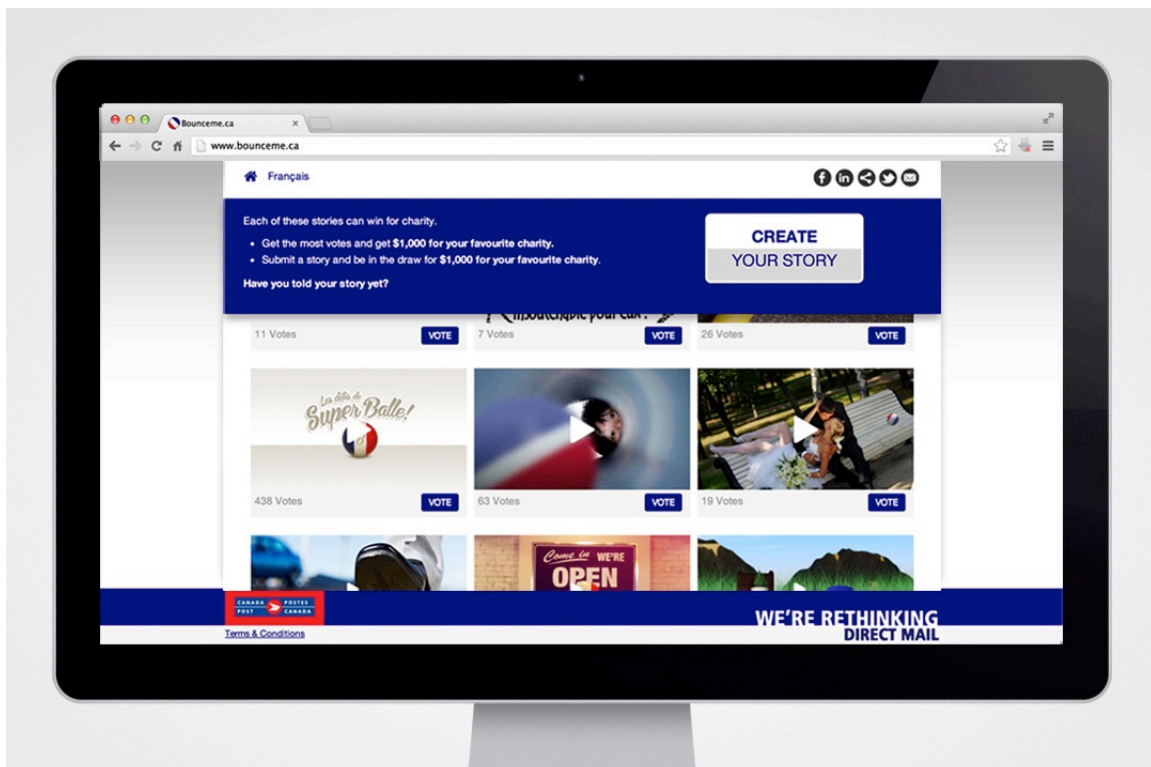
We created a simple page to allow our targets to create simple videos. About balls. We suggested that they should be as creative as possible (this was sent to creative agencies, after all), and we offered them the opportunity to vote on the most creative.



Step 1 : Build your story (at least three slides)



The most votes won \$1,000 for their favourite charity. And there was a random draw for another \$1,000.



Why make videos? Why give away money?

This wasn't about making videos, or giving away money. It was about demonstrating the power of DM in an integrated campaign. As soon as they followed the URL to the site, our point was on the way to being proven. However, there was a challenge: it was as important (from a branding perspective) that the folks we enticed to follow the URL had a positive, sharable experience, and didn't feel exploited for no good reason.

And so we gave them something engaging to do, worthwhile to share, and valuable to participate in, and made it dead easy to engage, share, and win. The only thing left to determine is: did it work?

PHASE 1 – Measurement/evaluation of outcomes

We sent the direct mail piece to **1,053 people**. Within two days (March 19 – 21, 2013), **877** went online to see what it was all about. That's an **83% response rate**. Yes, it is a crazy number, but it's true.

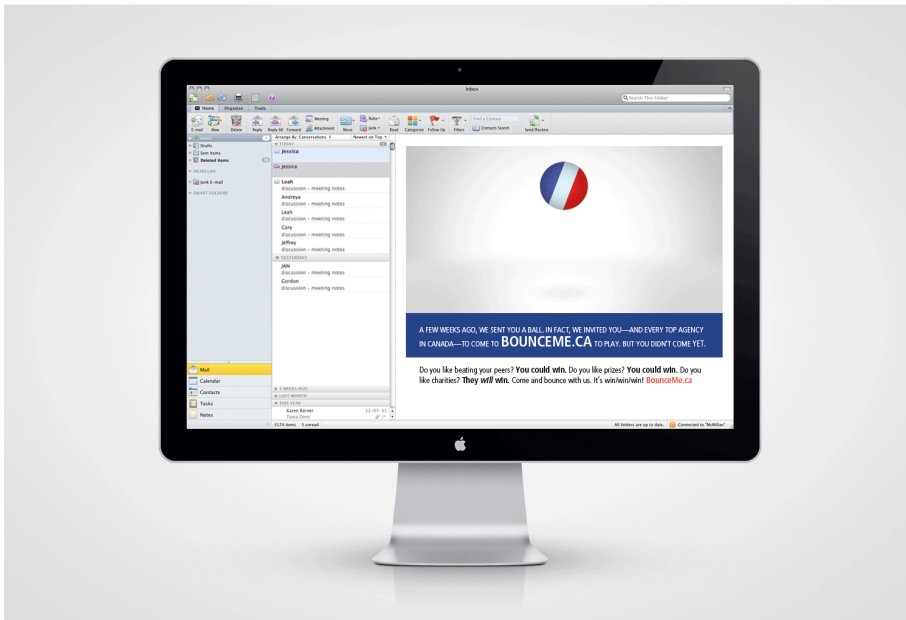
Let's hear that again, because it just doesn't happen that often: that's an **83% response rate**.

We followed up our first piece with a test that included both a follow-up DM and EM. We sent a follow up DM to 650 people.



The follow-up communications didn't pull in many new visitors, but then, with the first response rate was so high; there's wasn't much room to raise it.

By the end of the campaign, our audience acted, in a big way: we had **223 shares** (Facebook and Twitter worked best), sharing brought **359 visitors** to the site, and there were **1,576 total votes**.



Direct mail results

- 1,053 DMs mailed to agencies across Canada
- 877 responded – 83% response rate
- Time spent on site – 3 minutes and 50 seconds (average)
- 22 stories posted
- 223 shares – 359 visitors through sharing
- 1,576 votes for favourites

Follow-up results

- 650 printed direct mails were sent
- 353 marketing emails were deployed
- Voting spiked to 300% over average

Client reaction to Phase 1

“Thank you a million times for getting us to this point. This piece is creating a lot of positive buzz on our executive floors. I’ve already been asked today for an update on how many responses we’ve had. Clearly, lots of interest and energy around it!”

“You have all worked incredibly hard to deliver this campaign, and I’d like to extend a sincere thank you and congratulations to all of you. This is pretty cool stuff, and we are all looking forward to the positive changes in the perception of mail it’s going to start to make! Looking forward to the next phases!”

PHASE 2 – Solution overview

Mail worked to drive response in a well-planned cross-media campaign. However, mail isn’t just about driving people online. A well-designed, intriguing mail piece that piques the curiosity of your audience will get them to respond and take action, and bring them closer to your brand. That’s where Phase 2 came in, walking through the door we opened with Phase 1 and bringing the message home for our audience.

And, as this is a campaign about direct mail...let’s keep using direct mail. Phase 2 actually had three direct mail components, spaced out quarterly for three quarters. Each piece was designed to underscore a specific value of direct mail (and Canada Post) in a voice and tone that would capture (and keep) the attention of our (still) cynical audience.

PHASE 2 – Implementation and challenges

Each piece in Phase 2 was intended to stand out, recapture attention, remind our target of the ball they saw, reinforce the values of DM and Canada Post, and start the individualized conversation. Here are each of the three pieces.

Phase 2A – What the duck?

Here's a question every direct advertiser asks themselves at least once: "Hey, can I mail this?" We sent out two pieces with this question attached: a high-end (\$50) Duck DM with a video recorder/player inside with a personalized message from the Canada Post rep, and a low-end (\$10) Duck DM that, while "low-end," was still dimensional, die-cut, interesting, and unusual to receive in the mail.

The call to action? Let's talk.





Phase 2B – Be careful...it's sticky

Agencies love making fun of clients. Sorry, it's true. So we helped our targets with some fun post-it notes that played with common agency complaints about clients, got a little risqué in entendre, and generally encouraged creatives at our target agencies to spread the sticky fun. Oh, and spread our campaign message.



The CTA in this case was a URL to our “DirectMailWorks” landing page. Again, we wanted to demonstrate added value, not sell hard, and just keep the conversation going.

Phase 2C – Just coasting

Remember how agencies love making fun of clients? It's still true. Know what else agencies love? That's right: beer.

This time around we sent our targets a set of agency-specific beer coasters produced by the “Ad Agency Woes Beverage Company” and chock-full of typical client comments, agency speak, and familiar situations. And some humour (we hope). The coasters were packaged in a custom vintage box, and included the promise of a set of beer glasses in exchange for an appointment.







Another brilliant idea shot down by the creative director before the client ever sees it? Worked all night on a concept only to watch it summarily dismissed and tossed into File 13 again? Maybe you need to disappear into a big glass of BITTER REJECTION dark. Crafted from the gently washed skins of broken dreams and recently deceased creative ambition, BITTER REJECTION will stain your lips for a long, long time.



Discover more direct mail ideas from Canada Post at canadapost.ca/directmailworks



It was supposed to be an email, a banner and a landing page. Then the client had a brilliant idea: let's make the banner animated! And say, when you're gathering statistics, can you just toss them into a deck so I can show my boss how great we're doing? And can I get another couple of banners with just a slight tweak, no biggie? What do you mean, more money? This could turn into something big for you, so just absorb it this time. Okay?



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Please make it go viral. And don't bother looking for a call to action, it's not there. It's not that there isn't one. It's just not there. The audience is everyone, ages 12 to 68, and they like cool things. The USP reads as follows: It's Better! Oh, and please make it go viral.



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Make sure the phone is on mute, it's another BORING client meeting. Who set it over lunch, anyway? Are there cookies? Say, have you seen my new tattoo, it's really cool, look! Huh-huh-huh, the client said a swear word. Somebody spin my chair! OMG, when did I get that pimple? Look, I drew a puppy. Um...is anybody taking notes?



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PHASE 2 – Measurement/evaluation of outcomes

One of Canada Post's goals for the campaign was to help drive channel revenue and help the agency advisors meet their revenue targets. By the end of the year, the agency program (which included this campaign and other tactics such as webinars, forums, and other touchpoints) **exceeded program revenue targets by 22%**.

The other main goal for the campaigns – again in conjunction with other tactics – was to introduce the agency advisor team and create leads for sales calls. By the end of the year, CP's agency team **exceeded their target number of sales calls by 40%**.

Here is a report directly from our client, Canada Post:

To continue the momentum and keep Direct Mail top of mind, a series of DM-based campaigns were rolled out on an ongoing basis after the BounceMe challenge. These ongoing awareness campaigns (oversized duck, notepad DM, coasters) were well received by the target audience.

Research completed at the end of year to assess the effectiveness of the program also supported this. Recall among agency personnel who Canada Post targeted for these campaigns (telephone & online survey using list of agency contacts for campaigns) was quite high.

*Of those agencies that recalled received promotional materials in the past 12 months, **87% recall receiving from Canada Post.***

From those, on an unaided basis:

- *45% mentioned the coasters/beer coasters*
- *31% mentioned ball/ball in tube*
- *20% recalls direct mail*

Aided Awareness was also very high for the campaigns:

- *BounceMe Campaign (37%)*
- *Direct mail package with notepads (30%)*
- *Let's talk/ Oversized duck piece (24%)*

At the program level (marketing campaigns, industry events, executive forums and work of the agency advisor team):

- *Canada Post exceeded its revenue and sales call targets*
- *The level of knowledge of direct mail seems to be increasing as well - **39% of agencies from the research said their knowledge of DM has increased a lot or somewhat compared to a year ago. Not bad for a little ball in a tube.***