



## Case Study Series: What's Working in Marketing & Selling Professional Services

### Firm Combines Direct Mail with Online Features to Increase Sales

By Mary Flaherty

#### Overview

Founded in 2005, EPIC Translations is a language services provider based in the Metro Detroit area in the U.S. The company started as a part-time endeavor when company founder Mostansar Virk was brought in as a consultant on a large translation project. In July of 2008, Mostansar Virk resigned from his job to run EPIC Translations on a full-time basis. By 2011, the firm had grown to five full-time employees with a network of more than 20,000 translators fluent in 150 languages worldwide.

#### Situation

While the company had initially been built on referrals, EPIC's director of sales, Imran Virk, needed to bring in more new business than he could by relying on referrals. He also saw that online marketing tactics, such as email marketing and blogging, were not generating the desired results. According to Virk, "Online and email marketing is not as effective as it once was, as it is so commonplace now."

Noting the lack of clutter in his physical mail box, Virk decided to explore traditional tactics such as direct mail. Surely, he thought, EPIC's chances of gaining awareness and attention were greater in an environment that has less clutter.

The small company, however, did not have a grand marketing budget.

#### Approach

##### Create a Low-Cost, High-Impact Mailer

The company did not have extensive direct mail experience; however, it had sent targeted letter campaigns in the past. For this new campaign, Virk wanted to test whether a postcard mailing campaign would be successful at generating qualified leads and, ultimately, new business.

Although Virk had worked with external designers on EPIC's website and other materials, he decided to design the two-sided, four-color postcards internally, using Adobe Photoshop CS4. After some discussion around the optimal size to mail, he settled on a slightly oversized 5 ½ by 8 ½ piece.

"We ended up going with the larger style because it's a bit more appealing to the eye and it stands out -- as opposed to something that's very small and can get mixed in with the [other] mail that you get," says Virk.

A professional printer produced the mailer, and EPIC sent the piece in batches via first class mail.

### **Build a Strong Target List**

Virk targeted the mailing by building a tightly focused target list based on market research. "We based it on research done by [market research firm] Common Sense Advisory in terms of which industries and which locations spend the most amount of money on translations and interpretations," he says.

Using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, the company initially built a list of several thousand targets and then filtered it further by geography and industry subsets to arrive at the target list for this mailing.

Research also helped EPIC identify the decision makers in the translations buying process. "What we've found," says Virk, "is that there's generally about between eight to ten different roles or titles that make the decision. The title will generally be 'global marketing manager' or 'global product manager' or 'global marketing.' They'll have the word 'global' or 'international' in there."

### **Be Smart about Tracking**

To ensure the campaign was tracked appropriately, Virk decided to use EPIC's website, as opposed to a phone number, in the call to action. But he says that was tough decision. "A call is good, but if somebody calls in and you forget to ask 'How did you hear about us?' you don't know if your campaign is effective."

Moreover, using a web-based call to action allowed the company to direct prospects to a specific landing page. The company created three different landing pages, one for each of the three industries – legal, medical, and engineering – that it targeted in the mailing.

An added feature of the online management of the campaign was the addition of a QR code (a "quick response" bar code printed on the piece). Says Virk, "Just about everybody has a smart phone nowadays, and they can just scan the postcard and be taken directly to that specific landing page."

Once on the landing page, prospects had the option to complete a form to receive additional information. The form connected to EPIC's CRM system . Within about 12 hours, the company's inside sales reps would contact interested prospects by phone. Prospects who were not ready for a sales contact and did not complete the landing page form had the option to download a brochure to learn more on their own. These downloads were also tracked via the CRM system, so EPIC could follow up with email and other messaging.

### **Results**

Because Virk wanted to be able to test the campaign before completely implementing the mailing, he started by sending 250 postcards as a pilot. The campaign is now rolling out over a three-month period. EPIC's sales cycle is relatively long, so results will be monitored over the course of several months. Some prospects have an immediate need, but in many cases sales

don't close for several months -- up to a year. While it's still early, Virk is encouraged by the results of the campaign thus far. To date, with 500 of 1,000 pieces mailed, there have been 100 responses received via landing page views. Eight percent of respondents completed the online form. Other visitors can be tracked for all future visits across the entire website. So, should they come back and complete any other form, the company can identify them by the cookie in their browser.

As a result of the campaign, EPIC has already submitted three proposals for new business. And with typical clients generating \$10,000 to \$25,000 in annual revenue, closing any of those would make a respectable return on investment for a campaign that cost no more than \$4,500 to implement.

### **Additional Insights from Imran Virk at Epic Translations:**

- **Don't be afraid to be different and try tactics that have worked in the past.** What can actually get somebody's attention now? Believe it or not, people do pay attention to something that they receive in the mail. I know I certainly do.
- **Being a small business, we don't have a full-time IT staff** that would be able to implement the technologies really needed to do additional tracking, but using some free online and open source technologies, we were able to overcome that challenge. For website tracking we used a combination of Google Analytics, FM Click Tracker, and Woopra. We utilized QReate & Track to generate all of our QR codes which linked to specific URLs so we're able to determine which industry mailing (i.e., legal, medical, or engineering) they came from.
- **Do not overlook the cost of postage.** I was very surprised at how much that was going to cost for the overall campaign. We initially thought the biggest cost would be the time spent on designing it and the actual printing of it, but that was a fraction of what the actual postage was.

### **Resources**

EPIC Translations website: [epictranslations.com](http://epictranslations.com)

Postcard landing page (legal industry): [legal.epictranslations.com](http://legal.epictranslations.com)

Design software: [Adobe Photoshop CS4](http://adobe.com/products/photoshop/cs4)

CRM: [Salesforce.com](http://salesforce.com)

Website tracking: [Google Analytics](http://google.com/analytics), [FM Click Tracker](http://fmclicktracker.com), [Woopra](http://woopra.com)

QR codes: [QReate & Track](http://qreate.com)