



## Cathedral: A Pioneer in Print and Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Cathedral Corporation delivers essential financial communication programs and direct mail to our customers. In our earliest days of providing fundraising and stewardship services for churches, we managed parish member lists and produced and mailed church offering envelopes. These envelopes were a vehicle for parishes to collect donations on a regular basis and helped parishes reach their financial goals. For Cathedral, this strategy of managing customer data, producing mission-critical documents and distributing the documents in the mail continues today as one of the company's core competencies. Cathedral continues to produce direct mail, both first-class and standard mail, for dioceses and archdioceses, parishes, churches, higher education and other religious and non-profit organizations. The company's century of experience continues with the creation of customized and personalized print and mail in various forms - statements, invoices, church offering envelopes, direct mail letters, postcards and more.

### ■ Brief History and What We Do

The corporation dates from 1916 starting as a manufacturer of corrugated boxes, called The Columbia Corporation, evolving into other "niche" products and markets using more modern paper-making equipment demanded by the market. Over time, management saw the need to diversify the business, acquiring a company that produced offering envelopes, managed parishioner lists and mailed these offering envelopes directly to parishioner homes.

Over time, the paper-board part of the business was sold, and the print and mail part of the business became the strategic focus of the company. Along with the existing church offering envelope business the company expanded to offer data management services and other kinds of direct mail. For example, a church mailing of offering envelopes commonly went to only a partial list of the parishioners. A personalized direct mail letter to the remainder of the parishioners allowed the church to stay in touch with all parishioners. This strategy helps the church become more financially fit by providing other ways to receive offerings and in addition, and just as important, to stay in touch with all parishioners and increase parishioner involvement in the church. The stewardship direct mail program for churches became a proven and effective approach.



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## ■ Evolving Success with Direct Mail

As a natural evolution of managing customer data and focusing on member type groups, Cathedral Corporation started to diversify into other industry segments, while still focusing on core competencies including personalized direct mail programs, high-quality production control and exceptional customer service. In doing so, Cathedral acquired companies in Lincoln, Rhode Island, in 1995; Rome, New York (now its headquarters), in 1999, and in Orlando, Florida, in 2014, with facilities tailored to produce business communications for member-based organizations such as banks, credit unions, insurance companies, governmental agencies and healthcare organizations.

In the for-profit business segment, just as in non-profit, Cathedral used customer data to create a more relevant experience and relationship. Transaction-type documents such as credit union member statements, bills or invoices showed monthly customer detail for that member's financial account. But these financial documents were also a canvas to convey important member information and can include targeted advertisements. Thus, mass customization replaced mass marketing. In other words, marketing to individuals each month with a first-class mailing that delivers a high open rate became an opportunity to connect to the recipient in other ways to improve the member experience and to market to them using data intelligence.

## ■ Customized, Attention-Getting Direct Mail And Electronic Communication

Over the years as capabilities of printing technology advanced, Cathedral moved from black-and-white printing to the use of one-color and now full-color printing. Documents produced with color and the use of data intelligence - whether in the non-profit or for-profit space - can be a more powerful tool to drive attention and response. This is also true with the outer envelope used to mail the document. Cathedral enhanced the message on the outer envelope with the use of color and/or messaging to gain action from the recipient - and the class of mail can also drive that attention. Financial documents must be mailed first-class, and recipients open and read a high percentage of them. When other types of direct mail such as advertisements are sent standard rate, it is a signal to the recipient of their being "junk mail."



### RESPONSE RATE

More than 92% of 18- to 23-year-olds found printed content easier to read than digital communication.



### ENGAGEMENT

80% of households read, or at least browse, their print advertising mail.



### TRUSTWORTHY

56% of consumers find print marketing the most trustworthy type of marketing.



### OPEN RATE

Some 80-90% of direct mail is opened, while only 20-30% of email gets opened.

### THE BOTTOM LINE:



### RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The average return on printed direct mail campaigns is 1,255%.



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## ■ Driving Success with an Omnichannel Approach

However, with the use of transaction data, a more relevant mail piece can increase the likelihood the recipient will take a desired action. Cathedral embraced electronic data to supplement its print and mail capabilities as the market demanded its use. Though some users may have shifted from print and mail to online communication, our experience has found it to be a complementary service needed in all industries. We began to format the same customer data we managed into an electronic format such as PDF or HTML documents. Though some transaction-based documents, e.g., bank statements, are being presented electronically, marketers are aware of research statistics that the most effective advertising offers need to embrace multiple channels - both electronic and print. We have found that print and mail is the most effective medium for direct mail advertising, especially when it is highly targeted and timely.



## ■ Partnerships and Relationships

Just as important in delivering exceptional customer service to our clients, Cathedral instituted partnerships and relationships with key industry associations. The unending quest of sharing and learning industry best practices allows us to deliver exceptional service and ensure our client-base of the strict rigor needed for an optimal production environment - as required by industry regulations and delivering on our promise of guaranteed quality.

Early on, Cathedral developed a strong relationship with the U.S. Postal Service due to the ever-increasing mail pieces it generated. The learnings and best practices in the mailing industry have been instrumental for the business. This involvement led to Cathedral's recognition as a Business Alliance Partner with the USPS. Our evolution of standard-class mailing services for church direct mail to its growth and integration of for-profit industry segment with first-class mailing services, quickly cemented the need for our company's involvement with the U.S. Postal Service throughout the years including leadership roles on the Postal Customer Council (PCC), Mailers Technical Advisory Committee to the Postmaster General (MTAC) and the Area Industry Mailing Focus Group.



## ■ A Strategic Church Acquisition

In 2021, eager to grow its market share in the church space, Cathedral acquired Letter Concepts, a Berlin, Connecticut, firm that specializes in personalized direct mail fundraising to Catholic dioceses, archdioceses and parishes nationwide.

Co-founded in 1989 by brothers John & Tom Wilson, the firm had emphasized cost-effective, error-free production in serving some of the largest dioceses and archdioceses in the country with (arch)bishop's appeals, capital campaigns and special collections.

With the addition of the Letter Concepts team, Cathedral grew to more than 280 employees at four locations including its Rome headquarters and plants in Rhode Island, Florida and Connecticut. The acquisition of Letter Concepts by Cathedral enables Letter Concepts to provide clients with a wider range of communication channel opportunities including:

- Database creation by the LC programming department, including housing and updating of client databases.
- Personalized, targeted and segmented direct mail, lockbox and data processing services including data entry, check depositing and credit card entry of all campaign returns, which include supplying daily import files to be uploaded into each client's existing CRM software.
- New robust email communications and follow-ups, social media advertising to enhance program results, tracking of mailings to see actual in-home delivery dates, and a thorough analysis of mailing results to allow necessary adjustments during the campaign.

## ■ Reorganization and an Updated Presence: Cathedral Letter Concepts

In July 2025, Cathedral Corporation announced the sale of its Business Services Division to FSSI, a leading California-based provider of print, mail and electronic outsourcing services. In August 2025, the corporation announced its new name, Cathedral Letter Concepts, emphasizing its return to focusing on support of diocesan, church, higher education and other nonprofit organizations.

Today's world requires fast turnarounds, the ability to manage customer demands and competitive pressures, and to incorporate technological advances to benefit the corporation and our customers.

Our clients in all areas of the nonprofit space continue to need omnichannel communication programs that deliver a measurable, profitable return on investment.

To serve its diocesan and archdiocesan, church, higher education and nonprofit customers best, Cathedral Letter Concepts' continued strategy remains focused on managing customer data to produce customized direct marketing programs to deliver appeals and campaigns as well as envelope and electronic services, featuring high-quality production control, precise data management and exceptional customer service.



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