

DCA Annual Summit 2026 - Full detail programme agenda

Registration: 8.30am - 9.20am

9.15am – 9.40am

Direct Commerce in a Changing Market: Balancing Mail Costs, Data and Performance

Leighton Cuff, Conexance & guests

As market conditions shift and mailing costs evolve, direct commerce teams need to make every campaign count. This panel explores how data, collaboration and performance insights can help balance cost pressures with measurable growth.

9.55am – 10.25am

The Future of Mailing Campaigns for CRM & Prospecting

Alexandra Birchall, Director of Marketing, Coopers of Stortford, Claire Flanagan, Head of Customer Strategy, Cotton Traders & Mark Griffith, Media Specialist, Royal Mail

The role of mail is evolving in exciting ways. As brands navigate a changing landscape and a wider choice of customer acquisition channels, they are increasingly exploring where and how print can deliver even greater value when integrated with digital media, helping to drive reach, engagement and commercial growth. During this session, our panel will share how they are adapting their approach and explore:

- The future of mailing campaigns – how the role of print is changing and where the opportunities lie.
- Mail for CRM and prospecting – how brands are using mail to engage existing customers and reach new audiences.
- Print within the wider marketing mix – how mail and digital channels can work together to drive stronger results.

10.30am – 10.55am

Savvy Circles Round 1 – Choose from one of the following:

Table1 – Data versus creative - which is more important?

John Sinclair, Citipost

Successful campaigns depend on many elements coming together, both for digital channels and physical ones. This discussion will mainly be focused on physical channels such as Direct Mail, Partially Addressed Mail, and Door Drops. There has been a push lately by organisations such as The DMA and JICMail expressing the critical importance of data selection and quality. This is all very well, but without an attention-grabbing creative the message won't land or convert. So, we shall be asking the question - which is more important?

Table 2 – Entering the US market: Grabbing the opportunity while avoiding the pitfalls

David Ballard, MD, Ballard Direct

Many British DTC brands have achieved enormous growth by marketing into the US. Boden, for one, recently reported that its 2025 US revenues were about \$260 million – nearly half of its total revenues. This savvy circle will explore how to enter the US market in a way that will maximize the chances for success while avoiding the pitfalls that can unnecessarily increase costs and risks.

Table 3 – Business Insights – the importance of looking at your business from the outside in

Alice Buttling, MD, Attinger Jack

Businesses often get stuck in rut & internalised. Change feels higher risk than doing what you always do, and with a busy team often things remain on the ‘to do’ list for way too long. Having an unbiased look into your current strategy, objectives & challenges creates an action plan to move the business forward.

Table 4 – Is your email strategy built for how inboxes actually sort mail today, or how they did five years ago?

John Smith, Founder, Inlights.io

Gmail, Apple and Outlook increasingly prioritise emails based on how likely each individual is to engage. Simply hitting send no longer guarantees visibility – attention must be earned. This savvy circle explores what that means for CRM and direct commerce teams. How should strategies adapt? What builds – or damages – your reputation with customers? And does your creative give people a reason to engage, or simply scroll past?

Table 5 – Running your business in the age of AI

Laura Newbold Breen, CEO, ACID

AI is rapidly becoming part of everyday business, but with the opportunities come important questions around intellectual property. What should businesses consider when using AI-generated content? How can you embrace new tools without inadvertently putting your own IP – or somebody else's – at risk?

Table 6 – Sexy Data, AI & Sweets - Seasonal strategies for smarter direct marketing

Leighton Cuff & Yasmina Dorchy, Conexance

Seasonality can shape what customers buy, when they buy, and how much they spend. Join us for a practical roundtable on using customer data and AI to time direct mail, test seasonal offers, and improve response and average order value—with sweets on the side, strictly for fun.

10.55am – 11.20am: Morning Coffee

11.20am – 11.45am

Finetuning Digital Performance

Chaired by Chris Simpson, Entrinsic Consulting with input from James Taylor, Viara, & Dave Colgate, Bamboo Nine

Many DCA members are seeking expert advice on several digital conundrums, including:

- How to measure the ROI of organic & paid SEO
- How far GA4 data can be trusted

- Are upselling and order editing add-ons worth using and how can brands ensure offers are relevant and personalised?
- Top tips to avoid abandoned baskets e.g. removing checkout friction points, whilst also capturing useable customer data
- Best plug-ins for websites and those to avoid

Our panel will endeavour to answer these and any other questions you have. Note we also have a session dedicated to AI later in the day...

11.50am – 12.10pm

Tips to ensure success this Peak Season

Will Martin, CEO, Littledart Fulfilment & David Fanous, Head of Sales, F4E

With peak season (for most) edging closer, DCA members have asked if there are any 'fast to implement' tips that can help to improve their efficiency:

- How to achieve faster picking, packing and dispatch
- How to better manage carrier options and subsequent relationships. Is it too late to implement a carrier management solution with a returns facility?
- Selling into Europe and USA – how to avoid red tape, be compliant and most efficient way to handle returns

Join the discussion to better understand the impact of peak season demand and what fellow member companies are addressing this year.

12.15pm – 12.35pm

Are you showing your customer emails the love they deserve?

John Smith, Founder, Inlights.io

A piece of printed direct mail earns real scrutiny because it costs something to print and post. Email costs almost nothing to produce and send, and yet it isn't always getting the time and attention it deserves. In this session, John will draw on recent work with brands such as Boden, Dr. Martens, Halfords & Nature's Menu, to show how personalised, animated hero images across their flows turned routine sends into moments customers actually noticed and proves why email still outperforms every other channel when it is treated with the respect you would give a mailer.

12.35pm – 1.45pm: Lunch

1.45pm – 2.05pm

Graham Winn, Co-Founder & Director, Yutrients Q&A with Chris Simpson, Entrinsic Consulting

Seasoned DTC business entrepreneur Graham Winn launched Yutrients earlier this year with his son. The start-up is targeting health conscious, time pressured consumers with the offer of a personalised 'all in one' supplement. Chris will pose a number of questions to Graham, one of which could well be how tough it has been to start all over again. Sit back & get to know what makes Graham tick, in a strictly business sense, and how his son inspired the concept of this new venture.

2.10pm – 2.35pm

Fine tuning your CRM strategy

Chaired by Emilie Carson, Consultant with Rachael Thornton, Senior CRM Manager, Moss & Claire Flanagan, Cotton Traders

Building strong, lasting customer relationships has never been more important. But as customers become increasingly considered about where, when and how often they spend, brands need to ensure their CRM strategies reflect changing behaviours and expectations. A customer purchasing less frequently isn't necessarily a customer who has disengaged from a brand. So how can businesses maintain that relationship, stay relevant and encourage loyalty without simply relying on promotions and discounts? Our panel will share what they are seeing within their own customer bases, what's working for them and how their CRM strategies are evolving to create more relevant, empathetic and effective customer communications.

2.40pm – 3.00pm

Savvy Circles Round 2 – Choose from one of the following:

Table 1 – Beyond the Catalogue: Connecting Offline & Digital for Growth

James Taylor, Viara

How can brands use programmatic display, CTV and DOOH to amplify the channels already driving their business, from catalogues and email to social, while also creating a scalable new route to customer acquisition?

Table 2 – Secrets of Successful Catalogue Creativity

Bobbie Cook, Creative Director & James L. Clarke, Brand Consultant & Writer, TA Design

Real examples to illustrate how you can improve the design of your print pages – and increase their effectiveness. We'll be sharing and discussing individual pages from real mailed catalogues, with 'before and after' versions to show how specific changes on the page make positive differences to the finished design of a catalogue.

Table 3 – Why understanding your customer journeys can make or break your business

Jo Young, Managing Director, UniFida

Your customers' journeys hold valuable clues to what's working – and where marketing impact is being lost. This roundtable will explore how customer journey insight can drive greater marketing effectiveness, from identifying critical touchpoints to turning customer behaviour into smarter activity, stronger engagement and better ROI.

Table 4 – Using AI to Turn Your Own Data Into Better Decisions

Chris Simpson, Entrinsic Consulting

Many businesses are making decisions based on data they don't fully understand or can't easily interrogate. AI is changing that. It's now possible to connect platforms such as GA4, Google Ads and Shopify to AI and ask questions about your own data in plain English. This roundtable will explore what's possible, the practical considerations involved and what you need to know before getting started.

3.00pm – 3.15pm: Afternoon Coffee

3.15pm – 4.20pm

The Practical Future for AI – Part One

Chaired by Chris Simpson, Entrinsic Consulting with Alex Pratt, CEO, Serious Readers & Dave Colgate, Bamboo Nine

Questions from members about using AI have been rolling in. Understandable, when there are so many potential applications to consider. Here in this session our panel will drill down and discuss the practical ways in which AI can make a useful difference in a business. This session explores practical ways to use AI to save time, improve day-to-day work and make better use of limited resources. Our panel will also discuss what to test, where human judgement matters and how to assess its impact.

The Practical Future for AI – Part Two

Harriet North, Marketing Manager, WCF & Mel Henson, Consultant

Case study which showcases WCF and its successful deployment of AI Customer Service Agents. Not rushing in, but taking time, to develop the brand guidelines, tone of voice, and equip the AI agents to deliver service comparable to that provided by its human CSRs.

All details correct as of 2 October 2026

