

## Learning Annex Forms Direct Division

By Melissa Campanelli

The Learning Annex debuts a direct division this month to better manage its growing direct marketing initiatives.

The New York-based producer of seminars, lectures and workshops offers more than 8,000 events annually throughout the United States and Canada. The company mails 5 million catalogs annually. In addition, The Learning Annex regularly does direct mailings to promote large class events in major tour cities.

The Learning Annex also has a data-

base that includes 110,000 students nationwide who took a course in the past 10 to 12 months and who opted in to receive e-mail marketing messages. Some students opted in to receive both the e-mails and catalog in the mail, so some cross-over exists.

The company began doing e-mail marketing in the past year.

"We first started sending out confirmation of classes to people via e-mail, and then started sending out promotional e-mails to people where we said, 'As long as you took this class, maybe you might want to take this other class,'" said Steven Schragis,

national director of The Learning Annex.

Nearly 20 million e-mails go annually to opt-in subscribers promoting upcoming events. As a result of all this activity, the company decided to form a DM division.

"Over the years, many different methods of communicating with our students and potential students have developed," said Bill Zanker, president and founder of The Learning Annex. "It's time we put all these activities under one roof and find a dynamic individual to coordinate them."

In the past, three or four people in different cities handled direct marketing,

Schragis said, but it was not something the firm focused on. The new division will be based in New York, and the company seeks a director who "really knows how to manage e-mail and regular mail databases."

The company also aims to be more active in the list business. The Learning Annex "probably has lists that are valuable that we are not really exploring as well as we could," Schragis said. "And we could be buying lists or renting lists a little more carefully."

The Learning Annex occasionally trades lists with other companies, but the evaluation could be done at a higher level, he said. ■



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