

## 7 Sure-Fire Tips To Direct Mail Success

Designed properly, direct mail promotions can help you to get a message across well. Designed poorly, they fail with a deafening thud as potential customers drop unwanted mail into wastebaskets everywhere.

We've summed up the secrets to powerful direct mail in seven easy-to-follow tips. Next time you conduct a direct marketing campaign, use these ideas to give your project the sweet sound of success.

### Send a personal message

Too often business owners insert their usual brochures into envelopes, stuff the mailboxes and hope for the best. Bad move. Of all advertising vehicles, only direct mail creates an intimate communication with your customer. Successful advertisers take advantage of the fact that direct mail serves as the most effective medium for cementing ongoing relationships with customers.

"Make your mailing piece as personal as you can," advises Brad Lehrer, president of Brad Lehrer Designs in Bronxville, N.Y. "Make it look like a one-on-one communication. You should print addresses right on the envelope. Better yet, use handwritten calligraphy if your mailing announces some special event. Remember that if people see their addresses have been generated by a mail merge program, they drop your mailing right into the garbage."

Avoid the common white envelope so often used for business mailings. Pick an attractive paper with a slightly off-white colour to stimulate interest.

To make your mailing stand out from the crowd, you could try unique envelope sizes, as long as they conform to postal regulations. You could even employ something completely out of the ordinary like mailing tubes.

Use postage stamps, Because so much direct mail is automatically considered junk, postage stamps make a favourable impression."

All this personalisation should pay rich dividends.

### Communicate a benefit

Recipients want a reward for opening your mail. That reward should be a clearly defined message that expresses a tangible customer benefit. Here are some ways to focus your message:

- Offer a free 30-minute first-time consultation
- Introduce a new product or service
- Announce a special event, such as a reception for your best customers or a special sale on certain items
- Enclose a coupon for a discount if used within 30 days
- Offer free estimates on services

You need a clearly defined offer if your mailing is to draw customers. Such announcements are timely and will stimulate a lot of attention.

### Create urgency

You can increase your direct mail success tremendously by adding a sense of urgency to every mailing. Print the deadline on the face of the envelope. This is one way to get recipients to open the mailing and read what's inside.

Without a sense of urgency, recipients most likely park your mailing on a shelf where it stays until forgotten. With a deadline in mind, they know they must take action or lose their advantage. Try these techniques:

- “You receive a 10-percent discount on services provided between (date) and (date)”  
“Hurry! This sale ends on (give a date)”
- “Respond by (date) and receive a free gift worth £–”
- “We will honour the first 50 customers with a (name of gift)”
- “Call by (date) to receive your free consultation”

### Provide sufficient information

Direct mail gives you enough space to fully describe your offer. Contrast that to radio, newspaper and television advertising, which limit your time and space to a headline and a few descriptive words.

With direct mail, you can go into detail, really selling and building rapport and getting your message told completely,

Consider answers to these questions when providing detailed information:

- What are the biggest benefits to be had from the products or services you're promoting?
- Why is this offer being made now instead of six months ago?
- What have other customers said about your offerings? Include testimonials.

Direct mail also gives you the opportunity to remind existing customers about your additional products and services. Even your regular customers don't realise you sell other things and have other services,

### Enclose a sales letter

Recipients usually read the sales letter first, so it's vitally important that the letter state the benefit right up front. Place the benefit in a headline and run the headline at the top of every sales letter.

### Address a targeted audience

Direct mail possesses the unique ability to zero in on a specific group of people. So who do you target first? Your best prospects by far are people who already buy from you.

Businesses are often so busy prospecting for new customers that they forget most of their sales come from current ones.

If you expand beyond your current in-house customers, pick a list carefully. It's all too easy to end up with names outside your target market.

One of direct mail's major advantages is the way it can target with laser-like precision,

#### **Mail frequently**

A single direct mail piece is soon forgotten. Wait too long between mailings, and customers move on to other suppliers. The secret is to maintain a regular schedule of mailings. Some consultants advise mailing to current customers every six weeks.

The good news is that direct mail offers an economy of scale unmatched by personal sales calls. Few companies can afford to send sales people out to the same prospect 10 or 12 times, but most companies can afford to use direct mail to efficiently uncover serious prospects.

Economies grow even more favourable when direct mail is used to keep current customers coming back.