

Tips for a Successful Postal Campaign

Businesses use direct mail because it works. With more than 70,000 mailing lists available, there is a list for every purpose. If you're planning on reaching your target audience through direct mail, then consider the following information; it should help make your postal campaign as effective as possible.

BEGIN WITH THE MAIL PIECE

A direct mail advertisement should be attractive and well designed. Size, dimension, layout and colour are important elements to consider when developing your piece.

- Personalize your message.
- Make an irresistible offer and promote it in the first paragraph.
- Spell out the benefits of your product or service. Point out your uniqueness. That you're offering something different and better than your competitors.
- Repeat your offer and the benefits of your product or service at least three times in your piece.
- Involve the reader, get them to send something back to you. Ask them to check boxes, answer a question, fill in the blanks, circle words, use stickers. These are all fun techniques that can improve response rates.

GET ON TARGET

The mailing list you decide on will make or break your postal campaign. The most critical step in guaranteeing your success is to target, target, target. Seriously consider who you are trying to reach.

There are databases of business and residential names and addresses available for almost any type of mailing, so the more precise you are with your selection, the faster, cheaper and better the results.

- For a consumer list**, consider geography, household income, age, gender, number of children, profession, credit status, buying patterns, hobbies, and special interests.
- For a business list**, consider geography, industry, SIC code, company size, revenue, size of the business, annual sales, number of employees and job titles

The idea is to be as specific as you can, so that you can target your best prospects. Targeting your best customer profile cuts the waste of marketing to someone who has no interest or need for your product, saving you and your company time and money.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT LIST

Once you have established who you want to reach and have a selection of lists to choose from, you need to review each list and determine which is best for you.

- Cost** - the cost of a list depends on the quantity of records and how many options or 'selects' are included. The more selects you add to a campaign the more specific the records are going to be. This of course increases the list cost, however it also increases your return on investment as you filter out those less likely to respond to your promotion.
- RFM** - these initials stand for the most important criteria for evaluating the names on a mailing list:
 - Recency** (when the person last made a purchase in this or a related category)
 - Frequency** (how often the person makes such purchases)
 - Monetary value** (how much the person spends on such purchases).
- How often is the list updated?** You want a list that's been updated frequently so that it's accurate.
- How often is the list used?** If it's used often, that suggests that it has a strong response rate.
- Response vs Compiled** - The people on a **response list** have responded to previous mailings and may even have made a purchase. This is the most expensive list to use, but it has the greatest potential for growing your business
 - The people on a **compiled list** are drawn from many sources such as telephone listing and census bureaus is usually less expensive to use than a response list

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TEST!

This is one of the most important tips. As mailing lists tend to be large, try sending your promotion to a small test group first, instead of sending it out to the entire list. This allows you to determine how well the list will perform. It's also a good idea to test a new list against one that you know works for you, so you can compare the results. You might even want to test two or more new lists at the same time. Doing a trial run will allow you the opportunity to refine your direct mail piece, saving you time, money, and hassle!

TRACK YOUR SUCCESS

Before you start your campaign, make sure you have the tools in place to measure the results of your campaign. This is often accomplished by assigning key code to the list; this is especially important if you're using more than one list and want to see which one performs best. Responses are attributed to the appropriate key code as they arrive. When your campaign is complete, be sure to spend time analyzing the results. Determine which mailing lists worked, which ones failed. Why did some fail while others succeeded? This new knowledge will help you improve the results of your next campaign.

Response rates vary on the product, the offer, the look of the mailer and your list. The industry standard is somewhere between a one and three percent. Although this may sound low, keep in mind the true test of success depends on how much a customer is worth to you over the next 5, 10 or 20 years. Will your customer buy more than one of your products in their lifetime? And remember that one new customer is a potential referral source to many other new customers.

Direct mail is a powerful direct marketing tool. But it is important to realize it needs to be an on-going process of continued mailings. You need to keep your name in front of your existing customers. That way, they won't forget about you and go somewhere else.