

Create mailings that produce results!

You want new and repeat business. Direct mail is an excellent tool to achieve maximized response. However, there are things you should know about creating direct mail packages. Don't be like other businesses that begin planning their direct mail campaigns by thinking, "I want to do a mailing on XYZ services. Should I use a mailing tube? A box? What gimmick works best?" There is a smarter approach. The first thing you need to do is ask, "What is the primary sales appeal of my product or service?" For example, what does your product or service do better than competitors' products to solve a problem or address a key concern of your customers?

And don't spend money on market research and testing to uncover key sales points and appeals before you create your mailing materials. Direct mail is a good research tool in and of itself. Here's a secret you should know: For a few thousand dollars, you can test an offer and know for sure whether prospects will respond. And it only takes a few weeks!

Once you've decided to do a mailing, what materials work best? Postcard decks generate a large number of responses at low cost. However, direct-mail packages – which are more costly and time-consuming to produce – generate a better quality lead. The only way to know which will perform best for you is to track both types of mailings.

Self-mailers – single pieces that include the customer's address – when done correctly, can generate new business for years. But direct mail packages that include several pieces (a letter, brochure, and reply card) can work even better. If there is a reason for a self-mailer's lack of success, it may be that it's not given the same level of attention that business owners put into their direct mail packages.

If you want to create successful direct mail materials, here are 10 basic rules to follow:

1. When using a letter approach, make it short (no longer than two pages). Most people don't have time to read a lengthy sales pitch; your letter may be tossed if it's too long!

2. Personalize your letters if possible. If not, at least use a "Dear Customer" approach.

3. Don't include too many inserts with your letter. A standard package with a letter, brochure, and coupon can work well. But make sure each includes a good offer. The offer drives the success of your direct mail!

4. When writing copy, assume that your product is the last thing on the reader's mind. Address specific problems, issues, technology, and competitive products that they encounter every day.

5. Avoid using industry jargon. It turns readers off and puts up a red flag that you're not in touch with their needs.

6. Make your mailing look professional. A letter crammed with fake handwriting, arrows, pop-ups, and other gimmicks can turn against you. However, using other call out techniques can strengthen your mailing materials and increase response. The trick is to obtain professional guidance when creating your materials.

7. Stress your offer. For example, if you offer a free financial consultation, sell the reader on the benefits of that consultation. Stress the "no risk or obligation" aspect. For example, if it is an invitation to a seminar, sell the knowledge attendees will gain rather than the product or service being promoted at the seminar.

8. Choose an appealing offer. A lead-generating package should never sell just the product or service; it pushes the offer. And always include an offer! Remember this: There is no stronger draw than the word "free." Offer a free trial, free analysis, free consultation, or free sample. Even a free brochure or offer for free information can work.

9. Write copy that enhances the perceived value of your offer. For example, a collection of brochures becomes a "free information kit," a checklist becomes a "free customer's guide to wealth or better health" and an article reprinted in pamphlet form becomes "our new, informative booklet, 12 WAYS TO LOWER YOUR TAXES, CHOLESTEROL, etc."

10. Keep track of which mailings and offers work best. That way, you can use them in future mailings. And keep in mind that an offer may bring in customers, but it's up to you to retain their business through continued direct mail, effective offers and good customer service.