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8 Simple Steps to Direct Mail Success!!

Discover the simple yet highly effective truths about direct mail that will lead to explosive results with all your direct mail campaigns.

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So What's All The Hype?

The rapid expansion of email and online marketing seems to have pushed direct mail marketing out of the way. If you have dropped direct mail from your overall marketing strategy, you are missing out on a significant opportunity to drive new sales, increase margins and retain current business.

The United States Postal Service reaches every single mailing address in the country – that's about 150 million residences and businesses!

How can you take advantage of the huge potential?

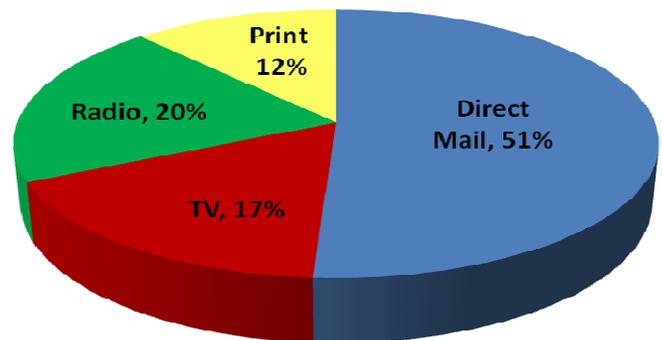
Let's start with some high level facts.

Direct Mail Advertising Dollars Work Hard For You

- In 2008, businesses spent about \$49 billion on direct mail and generated \$636 billion.
- Gallup polls reveal that about 75% of Americans open everything they get in their mailboxes.
- American Demographics reported that about 77% adults read direct mail, and 59% of those surveyed had read direct mail in the previous week.
- The United States Postal Service says that between 70% and 90% of all mail it delivers to customers is either read immediately or saved for later reading.

What kind of direct mail advertising do customers read?

- About 73% of the direct mail read by customers is from retail stores.
- Another 59% of mail read comes from charities or other fundraising efforts.
- Direct mail from entertainment companies constitutes 46% of the direct mail that customers read
- 22% of customers read direct mail from Internet services.



Advertisers spend more than 51% of their budgets on direct mail! Radio advertisements account for 20% and the balance of their advertising dollars are spend on television, magazine and newspaper advertisements.

Advertisers spend the majority of their marketing budgets on direct mail because it works.

Compared to other advertising costs, direct mail is among the most cost effective. According to the Direct Marketing Association, every \$1 invested in direct mail advertising will generate \$12 in sales. Whether a direct marketing advertising campaign is successful depends on actual sales versus investment. Tracking your return on investment (ROI) is critical to determining the profitability of your marketing strategy.



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Okay, so it works great for others, but what about me?

There are many creative ways to get your message out by direct mail. Clever advertising campaigns that pique interest, are visually appealing, and carry a clear message are the most successful. Your message must be appropriate to your audience and your product or service.

Mailings can be designed as:

- Coupons or discounts
- Notification of sales events
- Invitations to free seminars or grand openings
- Informative updates about your company.



The top reasons people respond to a direct marketing mail item:

- Offer coincided with need for the product or service 67%
- Reader's name on the front of the envelope 66%
- The package looked interesting 60%
- The mailing contained a special offer or discount 54%
- The package looked important 52%
- A free gift was enclosed in a package 42%

The United States Postal Service, Household Diary Study, for 2008 found that 1 in 5 or 20% off all households surveyed made a purchase after receiving a direct mail advertisement

Those with higher than average income respond more frequently to direct mail advertisement.
Households with incomes about \$150,000 respond to almost 3 pieces of direct mail each week.

So how do you take part in this cash machine called direct mail?

Here are 8 simple steps to direct mail success!!

1. Good Headline

Your headline is your opportunity to grab the reader and gain more valuable time with them!

A good headline must do 3 things:

- **Capture the reader's attention immediately!**
- **Pique interest enough to read more**
- **Create value in the mind of the consumer**

Unless your headline does these three things, you can expect little return on your investment.

Some Simple Rules to Follow:

- **Keep your headline simple.** The reader will throw your mailing in the trash a few seconds after glancing at it unless you grab their attention immediately.
- **Use strong words** that are likely to evoke an emotional response from your reader.
- **Create a sense of urgency** with words like “order now before it’s too late” and “claim your savings now!”
- **Make the headline about the reader** and market from your heart. Headlines that address the customer’s needs are best.
 - For example, “5 ways to eliminate YOUR DEBT right now!” has more impact than “We can teach you how to eliminate your debt.” Questions that address a specific need often work well to get your customers to read your mailing. “Are you paying too much for _____?” is a great way to get the customer’s attention so that they will read more about your offer.

2. Make a Strong Offer

The purpose of the direct mail campaign is to sell, so don’t forget to **sell your product or service**. Use a couple of paragraphs to explain your product or service and how it can **solve a problem** or **meet a need** then make an offer to the reader. Offer the customer something of value in exchange for their response. Some good offers to generate customer response offer something free or at reduced cost.

- “Buy one and get one FREE”
- “Order today and save 50%”
- “30 Day Free Trial”
- “Buy 3 books and get the 4th book free”

If it’s an offer in a letter, entice the reader to respond and repeat the offer at least twice in the letter. Open with the offer, explain the offer, and then repeat the offer. Don’t forget to include your telephone number, business address, and other contact information.

Coupons: People enjoy getting coupons and saving money.



- **Of those people who earn more than \$100,000 per year, 72% clip coupons** and use coupons for their purchases compared to 65% of the national average for all other income levels.
- Those in higher income brackets also shop in discount stores, 66%, compared with 47% of consumers. Coupons, buy one get one free, discounts, and gift cards received the highest response from readers in 2008.

People like to save money on the products and services they need.

- **The majority, or about 71%, prefers to receive coupons in their mail.**



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Coupons are an excellent way to attract new business and to take advantage of the consumer's desire to save money.

3. Good Ad Copy

- Your **copy should be easy to read**, hook the customer with valuable information, and educate the customer about your product or service.
- Your copy **must tell your customer what action you want them to take**.
 - Do you want them to call for an appointment or come to your store?
 - Make this step easy
- **Make sure that the copy is error free**.
 - A misspelled word or poor grammar can undermine your company's credibility. Copy errors can result in a marketing nightmare.
 - An offer of 25% off selected products, but the copy incorrectly advertises 75% off can be very costly.
 - Advertising a product that has been recalled or discontinued can cause harm to your company's credibility.
- Keep your copy **fresh and accurate**.
- Each piece of a direct mail package **has a specific purpose**. The envelope should entice the reader to open it.
- **Testimonials sell**; use them in your ad!
- Ad copy **must be persuasive**. Make them want to buy from you; don't push your offer on them.
 - "Our exclusive sale is going on this weekend only and all products will be sold out. Available on a first come basis"

Side Note on Brochures

- Should include attractive and eye-catching graphics, but they must be readable.
- Brochures should contain benefits, features, comparisons with competitors, relevant technical detail, and applicable regulatory information.
 - If appropriate, words like "FDA Approved" and "Safety Tested" reassure the reader about the quality of your product.
 - Include graphics, photographs, diagrams, charts, and block quotes from satisfied customers to sell your product or service.

4. Use of Color & Fonts

- Include clear, full color images that focus on your product, service or special offer.
- Large headlines in a pleasing font grab your customer's attention.
- Aim for consistency by using the same or similar fonts through out the design.
- Do not use white font on black background (Reverse)
- Be careful about color combinations. Select colors that compliment each other.
- Your company telephone number should stand alone by using a big and bold font.

What's a color really mean?

- Red is the color of fire and blood, so it is associated with energy, war, danger, strength, power, determination as well as passion, desire, and love.
- Orange represents enthusiasm, fascination, happiness, creativity, determination, attraction, success, encouragement, and stimulation.
- Yellow produces a warming effect, arouses cheerfulness, stimulates mental activity, and generates muscle energy. Yellow is often associated with food.
- Green is the color of nature. It symbolizes growth, harmony, freshness, and fertility. Green has strong emotional correspondence with safety. Dark green is also commonly associated with money.
- Blue is associated with depth and stability. It symbolizes trust, loyalty, wisdom, confidence, intelligence, faith, truth, and heaven.
- Purple combines the stability of blue and the energy of red. Purple is associated with royalty. It symbolizes power, nobility, luxury, and ambition. It conveys wealth and extravagance. Purple is associated with wisdom, dignity, independence, creativity, mystery, and magic
- White is associated with light, goodness, innocence, purity, and virginity. It is considered to be the color of perfection.
- Black is associated with power, elegance, formality, death, evil, and mystery.



5. Use of Picture

Direct marketing relies upon a strong visual punch.



- Attractive photographs that are relevant to your business will make your mailing stand out from the rest.
- Use high quality stock photos
 - There are plenty of stock photography sites online that provide high quality stock photographs for a few dollars.

A striking photograph with color and visual appeal will get your customer's attention. They have to look at your mailing before you can sell them on your product or service.

- Photographs and graphics should be relevant to your product or service. For example, peaceful blue ocean, white sandy beach and a gorgeous cruise on the horizon is a great photograph to sell cruises or the services of a travel agent.



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6. Frequency

If you're only going to mail once, don't mail at all.

- The key to successful direct mail marketing campaign is to mail often. You can re-mail the same package to the same list or to an updated mailing list. Since timing is so important in direct mail marketing, the same customers who may have tossed your postcard or brochure away last month may need your product or services today. Re-mailing is definitely worth the time and money.
- Be sure to re-mail to those on the list who did not respond the first time. You can target them with a special offer or a limited time benefit.
 - If the first approach did not work, the second or third attempt may be successful. If they don't get your offers they won't respond.

How often you send out a direct mail advertisement depends on your customer base and your product or service. A few companies will mail once each month, others only a couple of times each year. When you mail and how often you mail depends on the type of product or service you offer to customers. **During peak seasons some companies will mail once each week.** As long as your direct mail advertising campaign is getting results, keep mailing.

Timing is important as well. For example, lawn and garden services or home improvement products will receive greater response in the spring and summer months than during the winter. Snow tires aren't likely to generate a lot of interest in July when the temperature is above 90° Fahrenheit.

- While responses will be slower in the off season, do not think that people are not reading your mail and moving closer to the sale in their mind.
- **Consistent advertising pays big dividends**

7. Use a Highly Targeted List

Mailing lists can be created from scratch or you can buy pre-screened mailing lists. **Your direct mail marketing strategy should target your niche market.** Once you discover who your customers are, you can tailor a direct mail marketing strategy that will increase sales and profit.

You can do all the research yourself, or you can hire a marketing agency. If your budget doesn't allow for an investment in a marketing research reports, you can still launch an effective and successful direct mail marketing campaign on your own.

What kind of list can I get?

There is more information available about you and everyone else than most of us are comfortable with. **Most likely, if you want it – its there.**



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For Consumer List, just to name a few...

- Age
- Kids
- Home equity
- Length of residence
- PC owner
- Veteran
- Income
- Net worth
- Sqft of home
- Hobbies
- Business owner
- Occupation
- Married
- Home value
- # of cars
- Buying behavior
- Religion
- Travel activity

For Business Lists, just to name a few...

- SIC Code
- Owner Ethnicity
- Sales
- # of Employees
- Location
- Titles

Geographical Options for both:

- City
- Zips
- State
- Radius
- County
- Area Code

One of the biggest reasons direct mail campaigns work is because the message is delivered directly to the customer, **it can be personalized**, and it is inexpensive. Buying a targeted list will allow you to tailor your campaign to that market more effectively thus increasing your response rates dramatically.

- **Variable data personalization can get more results than mass efforts response rates increase 34% on average**
 - **Not only text but graphics can be personalized based on the list you buy!!**

Once you find your target customer base, schedule regular mailings that offer savings to your potential customers. Monthly coupons and special offers will pique customer interest and increase revenue.

8. Don't Skimp on Size.....Size Matters!

Bigger is better. Need I say more?

Don't jump over dollars to save pennies. 3x5, 4x6 and 5x7 postcards are for loyalty mailings only NOT new customer acquisition.

- **Spend some money and show them you are a professional. Go 5.5x8.5 or greater.**

Bigger size prevents trying to squeeze too much information into the small space available on a postcard. Fonts that are too small or too elaborate won't work either.

A larger size allows use of large fonts, nice big pictures and you still have room for all the relevant information and sales offers.



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Check list

- 1. Headline*
- 2. Offer*
- 3. Ad Copy*
- 4. Colors*
- 5. Pictures*
- 6. Frequency*
- 7. Targeted List*
- 8. Size Matters*

Direct mail advertising will improve exposure for your business and increase sales. Be clear about your objectives before launching a direct mail marketing campaign. Know your customer demographics and direct your message to those who are likely to respond to your advertising by calling or purchasing your product or service. Follow up on all sales leads and track the response to your mailing. The only way to know what works is to keep records of calls, and purchases from customers. Direct mail will increase your company's visibility in the community and will increase your financial bottom line. Repeat mailings keep customers interested and will bring in those customers who need a bit of convincing to buy your product.

Now you know the secrets of the pros. Go enjoy success in all your direct mail endeavors!

Your partner in success,

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