



## TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL DIRECT MAIL

### Targeted data...

#### Who you mail is more important than what you mail

With direct mail, there are two main parts to your mailing; who you are sending it to and what you are sending, or in other words, the 'list' and the 'creative'. By far the most important of the two elements is the list.

It pays to invest in good quality data that is compliant with all legislation. An up-to-date list that targets the appropriate prospects is the key to successful direct mail. A data verification session is time or money well spent at the start of any direct mail process to ensure you are targeting the right named contacts.

#### Building a direct mail list

It is all about targeting and understanding who your ideal customers are. Don't waste your time and money trying to reach people that don't need your services. Spend time compiling a list of customers and prospects that actually have a need for the services you offer. Start by collecting data on your current customers and prospects, and then expand your list to include referrals, non-competing businesses, and names you obtain from a targeted mailing list company. A specific list will yield more results than a randomly compiled one. You could also run competitions and prize draws to build up your database of prospects.

If you are renting or buying in a list, an option to consider is to choose a list of people that have bought a similar product or service to the one you are offering. Use a reputable list broker.

#### Scale it up but stagger it out

Direct mail returns are often measured in single figures. But generally speaking, if you get a 2% return from sending 100 letters (2 sales), you will normally get the same percentage from larger mail outs if you use the same letter and the same quality data. And 2% of 1,000 letters is 20 sales. This predictability is what makes direct mail attractive. Depending on your capacity it is usually better to send 100 letters over 10 weeks, this makes the follow up much more manageable. (More on 'follow up' later).

#### Add seed names to your database

Make sure you add seeds to your database. Not any old seed but somebody that will give you objective feedback. Ask your friends, family, mailing house and include yourself as well. Then get feedback from these seeds. What did they really think and what did you think. Would they be interested? Did the item arrive? And how did the item look when it arrived?

## **Mailing...**

### **Envelopes**

Don't give it away on the envelope; a plain envelope is more likely to be opened as it holds no clue to the contents. Have you ever thrown away a letter that screams "get a loan from us" without opening it?

Also handwritten envelopes work a treat but are only really practical with small mailings or special prospects, a hand written quality envelope with a stamp will almost always get opened. It is worth the effort of cherry picking 5 or 10 of your best prospects and handwriting their envelopes.

### **Postage costs**

Pay attention to postage weights and sizes as your postage costs can use a large part of your budget. There are significant savings to be had by keeping within the standard letter format. A5 format can be as impactful as the A4 size but cost a lot less in postage. And never send mailing with insufficient postage, nothing infuriates more than a trip to the Post Office and then having to pay a surcharge.

## **An effective sales letter...**

### **Think in terms "you" not "we" when writing**

The person you're writing to doesn't care about you, your business or what you do. So talk to them in their terms, using the word "you" a lot. Think about the benefits of what you do rather than the features of the product or service. Try write in a 'language' that they will understand, a plumber will require a different style and tone to an investment banker.

### **Keep it simple and easy to read**

Focus on a key message that is benefit-led then support this with 'evidence', have a powerful header that draws them in. Keep the layout uncluttered and paragraphs short. Avoid overuse of italics, bolding and different fonts. Use bullet points and indenting judiciously.

### **Include an incentive**

An incentive to respond can really boost response, it need not be anything elaborate a simple £25 off for the first 100 customers can work wonders for response rates.

### **Use testimonials and / or case studies**

Nothing is more powerful than being "recommended" by someone else in the form of a testimonial. Use real names and business names, where possible try ensure they are sector specific according to each prospect.

## **Make sure you include a call to action and try making it urgent**

Don't assume people will know what to do after they have received your direct mail. Keep it simple and spell it out for them – "call 01327 81003 now to order your leaflet". Try and establish what their preferred way to respond is (telephone, website, email or response card).

Add some urgency to it, perhaps with a special offer that will expire on Friday. You want the busy decision maker to pick up the phone or go online and order now, not put the letter down with the intention of "doing it later"... because they'll probably not get round to it.

Also make it clear that you will be contacting them in the near future to see if you can help them; don't only rely on them to respond – they may simply forget or be swamped with other things.

## **Add a P.S. to your direct mail letters**

A P.S. at the foot of the page is the second most read part of a direct mail letter after the headline. Use it to reiterate your sales message, it will get read.

## **Check and check again**

Do a spell check and then get someone who can spell to check your letter. Also ask somebody objective to give feedback, what do they think you're offering. Is it clear and easy to understand? You could even do a small test mailing, send out the letter to 5 clients or prospects and ask them what they think.

## **The follow up...**

### **Make a follow-up phone call**

Telephone follow up can dramatically boost response, the customer is often expecting it, even wants it, it makes it easier for him to buy. So make sure you follow up your letters if you want the biggest return on investment. If you hate cold calling, then pay a temp to do it, or hire a telesales company. Be careful not to call people or companies registered with the [Telephone Preference Service](#), as that's illegal.

Don't do the hard sell when you follow-up. Aim for a dialogue, perhaps start out by asking for their feedback on the contents of your mailer. If they say they have not read it yet, don't fall into the trap of saying that you will resend it. Walk them through the content and make sure that you use descriptive words and phrases

### **Telemarketing scripts**

No matter how experienced you may be with telemarketing it is always useful to have a script, not necessarily the kind you read like a robot, but at least a list of points you want to cover in the call, it will keep you on track and in control. You are making those calls to sell not make friends a script will keep the calls brisk and business like.



## Find a way to track responses

You need to know how your direct mail campaign did. So find a simple way to track it. This can be a code that people must quote to get a certain offer, or better still, an offer in your letter that's not repeated anywhere else. Tracking in this way will help you test different types of campaigns to find those that work the best. Use a simple spreadsheet to work out your return rate.

Repeat the best performing campaigns and cut the poor performers. Over time you will build up a good understanding of what works for your product or service and will be able to improve your overall return on investment (ROI).

## And remember...

*'Marketing is not an event, but a process . . . It has a beginning, a middle, but never an end, for it is a process. You improve it, perfect it, change it, even pause it. But you never stop it completely.'*

-Jay Conrad Levinson

## So once is not enough

Your mailing needs to go out frequently, not just once. The average person may not be ready to purchase your product or service the first time you send out a mailing, but that does not mean they don't need what you are offering. Think about their buying cycle, is it daily, monthly or yearly. Statistics show that the average person needs to make contact with you anywhere from 6 - 12 times before they'll make a purchase.

## Lastly blend!

Direct mail should be a part of your overall marketing communications programme. If you leverage or can tie it into a programme of communication then you will get higher responses. For example by doing a combination of a press article, eNewsletter, or mailer; they can reinforce each other. Thereby creating lots of 'opportunities to see' amongst your customers and prospects.

If you are persistent about getting your message out to the right people you'll soon see results. Direct mail is an incredibly effective way to communicate with potential customers.

Good luck and if you need help with letter writing, database development, fulfilment, or telesales call Evolve Marketing Ltd on 01327 810003. We can help you grow your business using direct marketing.

Sharon French  
Director  
Evolve Marketing Ltd

(t) 01327 810003  
(m) 07962 438 532

[www.evolve-marketing.co.uk](http://www.evolve-marketing.co.uk)