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**Deliver Profits with Direct Mail**

**By June Campbell**

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If you are in business, you might want to consider using direct mail to find new customers or drum up more business from your existing ones. If using a print broker or a direct mail agency isn't within your budget, you might opt to do the mailing yourself.

Experts say that increasing your leads through direct mail is both an art and a science. However, you'll improve your response rates if you keep these "secrets" in mind:

1. Your mailing list accounts for 60% of your mailing's success. It must contain recipient's name (not just the title) and must reflect your target market. Additionally, it must be fresh, groomed to remove duplicates and incorrect postal codes, and recently updated.

You can rent lists for \$75 to \$140 per 1,000 (M) names. However, if you want "selects", expect to pay an additional \$5-10/M per select. (For example, if you want names of advertising managers working in Chicago and Hong Kong, you might be asked to pay for three selects — one for advertising managers and two for the geographic locations.

As a rule of thumb, the better you can target your market, the better it will be. For instance, if you are selling a golf book, you could send the mailing to every postal address within a zip code (expensive), or you could target the list to members of golf clubs or persons who have expressed an interest in hearing about golf-related products.

2. A direct mail package outperforms a self-mailer by a 4:1 ratio. Typically, a mail package includes an outside envelope, a one or two page sales letter and a reply device. The less-expensive self-mailers are not sent in an envelope.

3. Postcards are the most economical means of direct mail. Moreover, the recipient does not have to open them to read the message.

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4. Personalized messages perform better than non-personalized. Messages sent by first class mail that at least give the appearance of being hand typed and hand stamped will outperform those that appear to be bulk-mailed. Yes, first-class is more expensive, but perhaps you can cut corners in some other area.
5. The call-to-action part of your mail-out is critical. Be sure to tell your recipients what it is you want them to do, and provide a compelling reason why they should act. For example, you could include a no-risk, no-obligation offer that encourages recipients to contact you promptly for more information. Or, create urgency through time-limited offers, mention of an upcoming event, etc.
6. Put a teaser, testimonial or strong benefit statement on the envelope. You must induce the recipient to open the envelope, or all is wasted.
7. Encourage the recipient to contact you. Ask for the contact and provide more than one way in which the recipient can act. If you include a postage-paid Business Reply Envelope, you will only pay postage on the actual responses that are mailed.
8. Your sales letter can contain long copy, but only if it is written to hold interest. Write in a conversational manner, avoid jargon, write at an eighth grade level, and use an authentic-looking signature. As in any copy, use eye-catching headlines and stress benefits not features.
9. Remember to add a PS. After the envelope and headline, it's the most read element.
10. Analyze the results of your mail out, and learn from it. Use tracking so you know how many sales or contacts resulted from your mailing. Ask customers how they heard of your offer. If (or more likely, when) undeliverable mail is returned to you, remove these addresses from your list.

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### **Direct Mailing: Is It Still Effective?**

**By Gabriel Adams**

Direct mail, or marketing by snail mail, is an oft forgotten marketing method - after all, email is quicker, easier, and much less expensive. There are many businesses that now use email exclusively, and do not use snail mail for marketing purposes.

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But I believe that these businesses are missing out on a piece of their pie. Actually, they are leaving a piece of their pie for other marketers (ones who use direct mail) to pick up.

DMIS, or the Direct Mail Information Service, reports some important statistics, showing that direct mail is indeed a vital marketing method, even in this digital age. For example, DMIS reports that 67% of direct mail is opened by the recipient, and 45% is both opened and read. Also, 32% of consumers surveyed reported that they had responded to a direct mailing in the past twelve months.

Direct mail is still an effective marketing piece that every business should use, even internet based businesses. Direct mailing has several advantages over email, such as increased delivery rates, higher readership percentages, and the fact that a physical direct mail piece will make a bigger impact than an email.

If you run an internet business, you may not want to use direct mail as an initial marketing piece. Initial contact is probably the strongest point of internet marketing. But follow-up is one of the strong points of direct mail. Use direct mail to follow up with your customers, to let them know about promotions, or to follow up with prospects who have not made a purchase yet.

For all businesses, direct mail allows you to contact precise markets with geographical and demographical targeting. For example, if you sold commercial bakery equipment, you could send your promotional mailing to a list of bakeries.

Direct mail is still an extremely viable marketing method that you don't want to miss out on.

For more Direct Mailing Information, visit

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