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**Making Direct Mail Work for Small Businesses**

**By Sky Maya**

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If you own a small business, then you know the value of affordable and effective marketing. Unfortunately, many traditional and online advertising methods are becoming quite expensive. This article will explain direct mail guidelines and methods.

Direct mail is an often over-looked method that can be very effective if executed properly. There are three guidelines to follow when conducting an effective direct mail campaign:

1. Catch the reader's attention immediately. You only have a few seconds to do this before your mail ad is thrown away as junk mail. Therefore, opt for postcard mailings instead of sending your offers in an envelope. If your business is relatively small and unheard-of, the reader will never open it unless your company's name is familiar to the reader. Envelope advertising is cheaper than postcard advertising, but is only effective if you have already built up name recognition.

When using the postcard method, you will need to be able to print images on the card. I highly, highly recommend investing in a quality home photographic printer. You will end up saving money in the long-term, and your printer will be right where you need it whenever you need it. Whenever you have materials printed professionally, you pay for labour, expensive inks, and expensive equipment.

When searching for images to print on your postcards, remember the the point of this first guideline: catch your reader's attention. Of course you don't want an offensive image for your cards, but you do want one that is slightly "controversial". When choosing images for your cards, ask yourself these questions:

Does it stand out among the rest?

Does it contain bold colors (but isn't an eye-sore)?

Does the image relate to my business or current offers in some way?

Does the image request user interaction? (ex. a face staring directly at the reader, someone pointing at

the reader, etc.)

Does the image have enough white-space for some large text?

2. Offer the reader an incentive for responding. Unless the reader is and has been genuinely interested in your services/products for a period of time before receiving your postcard ad, they will never respond unless you offer some sort of incentive. For instance, your postcard could also serve as a coupon; tell your reader to bring in that postcard for a discount. Also, you could use the postcard ad as an announcement for a storewide sale. Be creative when offering incentives to your readers.

Be sure to make your incentive very visible on the postcard. Let's say, for example, your postcard is also serving as a coupon for 20% on your products/services. Print that "20% off" in large text with the image, along with your product type, such as "20% all dog beds". Then, on the other side of the card, usually with the recipient's address, print the discount again with any terms that may apply.

3. Target your readers. The best way to waste advertising money is by sending your direct mail to random people, paying no attention to whether they would actually buy something from you. This is much easier when dealing with business-to-business advertising. When it comes to consumers, finding out their interests is a little difficult.

Test out the waters first. A good place to try first is InfoUSA. They sell mailing lists of consumers and businesses and may provide targeted consumer lists. You may be able to create interest in someone who has never heard of your products before, but when you are starting a new direct mail campaign and you have a very small budget, keep your list targeted. You don't want to try to sell a web site to a business that already has one, or try to sell a dog bed to someone who only keeps cats.

I hope this article has given you some ideas on making your next direct mail advertising campaign more successful.

Sky Maya is the author of *Best SEO Tactics* – an excellent guide to optimizing your web site for high search engine rankings using proper and ethical tactics. Proven techniques! Buy it today and watch your site traffic explode!

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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.

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.

## Making Direct Mail Work for Small Businesses

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.

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