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Making a Hit with Your Marketing Campaign

By Susan Friedmann

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Considered a vital link in a show's promotional plan, direct marketing is vital only if it's done right. It's certainly not as simple as typing a letter, adding an address and stamp, and popping it in the mail. Direct marketing specialist Debbie Bermont, president of San Diego-based Source Communications, offers her golden rules for creating that vital, highly successful direct marketing campaign.

There are some key golden rules to making your direct mailings work effectively. That doesn't mean that you have to spend more money in order to succeed. Far from it. In fact, you could find yourself spending less — or at least spending more strategically — than you may be doing at present. Here's how:

Mail to Mr. Right

There's a simple but very clear distinction between junk mail and direct mail. Junk mail is mail that isn't wanted. Direct mail is something that goes to the right person and is wanted. One major key to the success of your direct mailing is to find the right people to mail to. If you are working on a follow-up show, then targeting the people who signed up last year would be a good place to start. If it's a new show or a new list, your first job is to start with a research phone call to find out who that right person is. Even if you're using last year's list, it is still worth a telephone call to check that your information is up to date. Don't ever rely on anyone passing your mailer on — it just won't happen.

Boost Your Letter

Once you've found out who to send your letter to, your next step is to make sure that your letter works to its maximum effect. Write it as a one-on-one dialogue. Beware of using industry lingo that your prospect may not understand. Keep your paragraphs short and sweet — no more than seven lines. Break up your letter into clearly defined subheads. And keep it to two pages in length.

Make All Your Copy Benefit-Oriented

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List the benefits so they are easy to understand. And remember that a benefit is a lot different than a feature. Features do not have the clout that benefits do. For example, stating that "10,000 people attended our show last year" is merely a feature. Write it in the context of a benefit: "You can have the opportunity of making 10,000 qualified contacts in three days," and you'll start making the impact that you want.

Repeat your offer at least three times throughout your letter: in your headline, within the first two paragraphs, and again in your closing paragraph. You can also include it in a "p.s." Last, but not least, tell your prospects what the next step is and tell them to do it today. Also include details of where to go for more information. Your goal should be for the recipients to immediately respond to your letter in a positive way.

Make an Impact

Your mail piece must stick out from all the rest. Yours will not be the only piece of direct mail that lands on your prospects' desks today. The more you can do to catch their attention, peak their curiosity, and urge them to open the packet, the better.

One particularly effective way of doing this is to make your packet lumpy. For example, you can include Post-it notes or candy (but never candy that could melt!). Make it even more appealing by relating your insert to your offer or your message. For example, insert a bite-sized Pay Day candy bar along with the message, "Every day's a Pay Day when you exhibit at the ABC Show!" Another idea is to affix large plastic aspirin capsules to your mailer with the message "Don't let this be another headache for you!" Or include a card with a telephone ringing along with the note "Give us a call today!"

Whatever your insert, make your message clear, make it novel, make it fun, make it useful, and make it one that leaves a warm fuzzy feeling — not confetti. All that does is leave a mess!

Too Good to Miss

Create an offer that can't be refused. This may be a limited time offer (the expiration should never be longer than 60 days), or an offer that sets you apart from your competition, such as a better location or a bigger booth size with early sign up. Whatever the offer, the incentive has to be sufficiently appealing to inspire immediate action.

Remember that there's no point in offering an outstanding incentive if no one knows about it. So in your direct mail piece, make this offer clear, easy to understand, easy to respond to, and relevant for your audience.

Easy Does It

Make it as simple as possible for your prospect to respond to you. The most effective option is a fax-back form with quick and easy response sections. Other possibilities are a toll-free telephone number, a postage-paid reply card, or a Web site. The Web site might not necessarily be your direct response tool, but it is certainly very effective as an additional interactive vehicle for obtaining more

information about the show.

Follow up by Phone

Whatever you send out, make sure you follow it up with a telephone call to close the sale. You'll see single digit response rates quickly turn into double digits as a result. Whoever makes those phone calls must be professional, courteous, and well-informed of the details of the show and the benefits of exhibiting.

Printing Essentials

There are plenty of ways to save money, time, and mistakes when it comes to your direct mail bottom line -- and all without compromising quality or quantity. Here are a few ideas to consider:

- Save money with a printer. Pick a printer that will work with you -- not necessarily the one that offers the lowest bid. If you don't, you could end up sacrificing both quality and money.

- Get at least three estimates from three different reputable printers.

- Ask to see samples of their printing quality.

- Remember that you can always negotiate a price (typically between 10 percent and 20 percent off of the price they first quote you).

- For small print jobs buy your paper at a discount paper warehouse and avoid the printer's markup.

- Always supply a very detailed purchase order that includes all the details that could be problems: price quoted, ink colors, paper specs, space requirements, quantity, etc.

- Make sure that you see a final proof before the job is printed.

- When possible, supply the printer with a sample of your final art as a guideline.

Mailing Tips

Not only does a little know-how help with your printing procedures, but in your mailing too.

If you want to save dollars, use third-class or bulk rate. You can save more than 70 percent of your postage cost if you can afford the slight time delay that bulk rate demands. Deliverability of bulk rate mail is between three and 10 days, but depending on the city, it can be just as fast as first-class.

Make up a sample package in the early stages of your preparation and take it down to your post office to check that it will go through the mail system without any problems. You don't want to find this out after you have printed 30,000 pieces!

Consider using a mail house to handle and sort your volume work. It can save an enormous amount of your time for a relatively low fee.

Concerned about the image of mailing bulk rate?

You can buy third-class stamps, which make a much better impact than a metered bulk rate mark.

What's the key to your direct mail?

It's the synergistic effect of multiple hits -- whether that's by mail, telephone, e-mail, broadcast fax, or an inexpensive postcard reminder -- which will ultimately make the impact and make the sale.

How Often do you Check Your Affiliate Statistics?

By David McKenzie

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Once a month? Maybe once a week?

You should be checking your affiliate statistics at least 5 times a week. If you take the weekend off, then make sure you check them each Monday through Friday. (What you want to be checking are number of hits, number of sales and number of affiliates signed up in the 2nd tier.)

Why?

Here are 3 reasons you need to constantly check your affiliate statistics:

1. Keep Track of Hits

You want to see if there is a sudden rise or drop in number of hits each day as this can be a good pointer to either a good or bad affiliate marketing campaign you are running. Hits lead directly to sales so a jump in hits should mean a jump in sales.

2. Keep Track of Sales

Did that latest ezine ad you ran lead directly to increased sales? By not checking your statistics regularly you'll never know. By logging in to your affiliate statistics page a number of times a week you will have a better idea of which affiliate marketing techniques are leading to sales.

Once you know a particular technique is responsible for increased sales then you can double or triple your marketing efforts with this technique.

3. Keep Track of Affiliates

With 2 tier affiliate programs you want to keep an eye on how many affiliates are signing up under you in the 2nd tier. If you see a drop off in affiliates one week, you may need to reinvigorate your affiliate sign up page.

The quality of the affiliate program will determine the level of affiliate statistics you get.

Some affiliate programs provide you with the direct URL that each hit has come from. This means you can tell if a hit came from an ezine ad you ran in another webmasters' ezine, from a text ad on your web site or from an email marketing campaign. This can be a tremendous asset for focusing on those affiliate marketing tools that are working best.

Don't just dismiss the affiliate statistics as something that you might check once a month. Regularly

checking your affiliate statistics is vitally important to being a successful affiliate.

David McKenzie is the author of a new e-book titled "The Facts You Should Know About Affiliate Programs" Get a Free 5 Day Email Course <http://www.1sthomebasedbusiness.com>



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