

Writing direct mail that really, really works

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By Julia Hyde

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So, you have something you want to sell. It may be a product, a service, or a cause. It could be a membership, a subscription, or a motor car. It might be paper, health products or the idea that the humane society or the Alzheimer's association is worth giving money to. It could be computer equipment, hand-sewn dolls clothes or garden gnomes.

Whatever it is you are selling, you need to let the right people know you're selling it. And one of the most effective ways of doing that is through direct mail.

Direct mail works best if you know the type of person who buys your product or service. For instance, if you sell to building contractors or pet owners you can get a targeted, personal message to them quickly.

What's more, computers make it possible for small businesses to produce professional looking mailings at a very attractive price. They make it possible to select names from mailing lists by demographic classification, frequency of purchase or by amount of purchase. Computers allow every letter in a mailing to include the name of the addressee, not just the salutation but several times throughout the body of the letter.

Here's some tips that will help you make your campaign more effective...

Always include a letter in your mailing

This may sound obvious but many mailings only contain a brochure. This is a mistake. There's a saying "Brochures are sent by companies, letters are sent by people." You need a letter because a letter is personal. And because letters persuade people to buy.

Get your letterhead right

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What paper, layout and design you use are very important. I recommend you steer clear of official company letterhead and design something more appropriate to your message.

If you want people to telephone, make your phone number stand out. If you want them to visit your web site, do the same. Your address is less important because even if you want people to reply by mail they'll expect a reply paid envelope. Don't put fax and telephone together - it's confusing for people. Avoid using telephone numbers using letters such as, 1-800-OUR SHOP. If you absolutely must use this type of number make sure you place the numeric number close by.

Write long letters

Most people don't want to write long letters, they worry they'll sound rambling, or they think long letters don't sell. But a long letter serves a purpose. If your prospect is going to buy your product, or contribute to your cause, he needs a lot of information. A short letter can't hope to give him enough information to

consider making a purchase.

A good rule to follow is: Keep selling until you run out of selling points. By the end of your letter your prospect should have more than enough information to make a decision.

Write a friendly greeting

When possible address your prospect by his name, as this will increase your response rate. If you don't have an individual name, you'll have to use a title such as Dear Business Manager, or Dear Creative Director. Don't address a householder as, "Dear Householder," Instead use, "Dear Animal Lover," or "Dear Mercedes Owner.

Use an attention-grabbing headline

Make sure your headline is at the top of the letter. Use it to highlight the main benefit. Make sure it's easy to understand and tells your reader why he should read your letter. Avoid headlines that try to be clever, or funny. They rarely work.

Ask for what you want

Don't be slow in asking for the sale. If you want the reader to buy your garden gnomes, tell him so, near the beginning. If you let him get half way down the page before telling him what you want, your letter will end up in the trash.

Write from me to you

Make your letter personal. Have one customer in mind while your writing it and address him as if he were sitting right beside you. Use the word "you" frequently. Instead of saying, Our lingerie is sexy" say, "You'll look sexy in our lingerie." Change, "Our blankets are warm and comfortable," to: "You'll be warm and comfortable in one of our blankets."

Get your reader to act NOW

By the end of your letter, the reader should have all the benefits of your product or service, and have become more and more interested. Now you need to get him to act. Tell him clearly and simply what you want him to do: telephone, fill in the reply card, send money, visit your web site or get a representative to call.

Finish with a PS

Make sure your PS sounds like something you "just remembered to say. By, try not to start your PS with the word "Remember" as it shows what you're about to say contains nothing new. Instead, use the PS to highlight a benefit not already included in your letter.

About the Author Julia is an independent copywriter specializing in advertising, search engine marketing and direct mail. For more information on how Julia can increase your company's sales visit her website at www.juliahyde.com or email info@juliahyde.com

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.

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

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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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