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PRINTTIPS™

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Write to Win!

Direct mail, when strategically written, can bring in thousands of dollars worth of new business. According to John Behrens, a consultant and contributing writer for American Printer Magazine, "In 1995, direct mail generated nearly \$385 billion in sales revenues for marketers."

Tapping into these dollars requires two things: a listening audience and direction. Grab your audience while you can. You have three to five seconds to persuade them to keep reading.

The more powerful your piece the better. Remember that you are competing against other direct mail pieces, phone calls, appointments, meetings, etc. Consequently, the better you define your audience using demographics (e.g. age, race, salary) and psychographics (e.g. lifestyle preferences such as driving a Porsche vs. an Audi), the more likely your piece will be read.

A clearly defined audience and direction should lead you to what one

publisher calls "a lapel grabbing promise". This is a unique selling proposition that tells the readers why they should choose your product or service instead of your competitors' products or services.

A few principles will help your reader understand your message while reviewing your letter quickly:

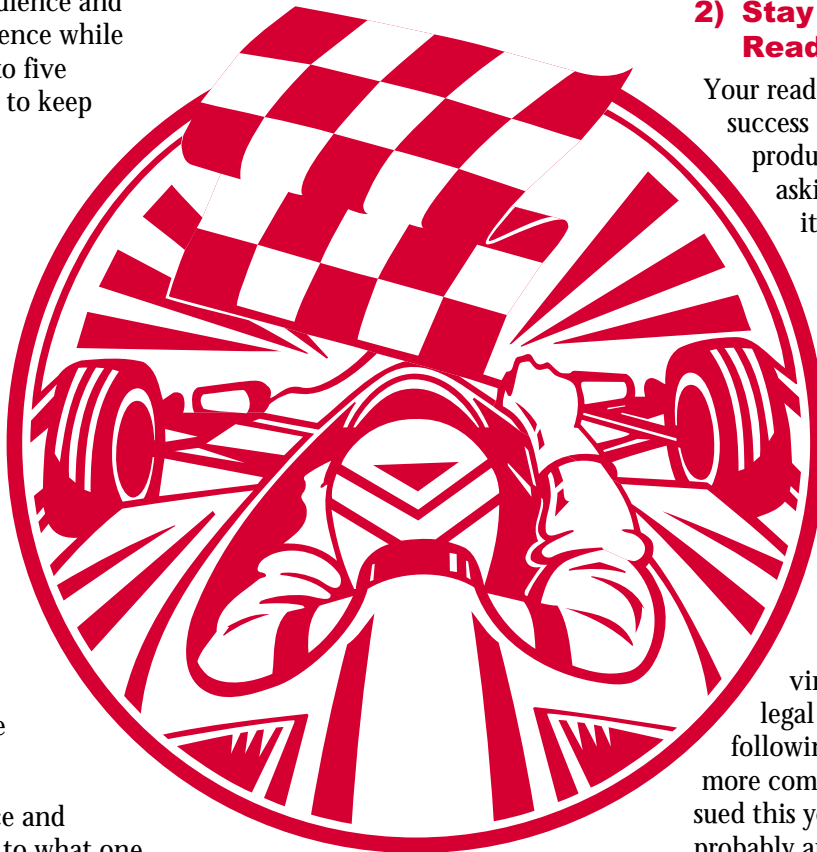
1) Make it Personal

Dale Carnegie, author of *How To Win Friends and Influence People*, says, "Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language." For this reason we recommend that you direct all your letters to a specific person. Keep the tone light and friendly.

2) Stay Focused on the Readers

Your readers aren't interested in your success or why you think your product is the best. They are asking themselves, "What's in it for me?" Be sure to tell them. Let them know you empathize with their problems and how and why your product or service can solve those problems.

Ask open-ended questions that help your readers convince themselves of why they need your product or service. If you were trying to convince them about using your legal services, you might ask the following question: "How many more companies do you think will be sued this year than last? Many would probably answer a higher number."



This gives you the opportunity to back up their excellent guess with a startling statistic or fact. The more questions you ask, the closer your readers will get to convincing themselves of their need for the product.

3) Consider Using Two Colors

Color has been shown to increase readership by as much as 41%, retention by 18% and the tendency to act by 26%. Two colors may refer to ink colors or to one color of ink combined with a color paper. Black and red is one of the most popular ink combinations.

4) Identify Important Points

Considering how much mail most business people receive, you're fortunate to have your piece opened. Once opened, the readers often have too little time to read an entire letter. This is why many publishers use underlining. Underlining enables the reader to scan your letter without missing the main points.

5) Apply Involvement Devices

Make a file of any direct mail letters that catch your eye. These will help you when you're trying to determine what to say or what devices to use in your letters. Determine what devices

the writers have used to raise interest in their products or services.

Many direct mail letters ask questions that draw the reader into an imaginary dialogue with the writer. The more questions the reader answers in an agreeable way, the closer the company comes to making them a new customer.

Some direct marketing professionals use Yes/No stickers. This way if the readers want to take advantage of their special offer all they need to do is put the Yes sticker in a certain place on the order card.

Many companies provide an incentive for readers who return their order cards by a certain date. This incentive could come in the form of a discount, free gift or a gift with purchase.

6) Appeal to Emotion

According to Jim Sinkinson, owner of the Infocom Group, "We make buying decisions not by using objective criteria, but by what feels right. Alarm your customers with statistics. Show them surprising facts. Then give them practical examples of how your product or service can address this information and help make them additional income.

7) Sell Benefits, Not a Product

Think of every problem that your product or service solves. This will give you a list of several benefits. It will also help you identify important points to include in your copy. Benefits are the selling points of a product.

Reviewing several print, radio and television ads will help you identify several benefits. For example, many car ads emphasize speed or comfort. Soda pop ads emphasize taste.

8) Provide Several Ways to Respond

Give your customers as many ways as possible to respond. Some of the popular ways include: 800 numbers, E-mail, fax and mail. If you have a post office box address and a street address, the direct mail piece should have both. Make sure you've included contact information in at least two places.

Discount cards and incentive cards can help tremendously when determining the success of a campaign. Both will give you a good indication of the response to your mailing. If you are using more than one card be sure to print codes on the cards.

If you want your customers to order through the mail, be sure to include an order form.

9) Power-Packed Testimonials

Call your customers at least once a year. This is a great chance to let them know how much their business means and also to get some great testimonials. Ask them how they like your product and how much new business they think it generated for them. Write down specifics of these conversations. Make the most powerful comments into testimonials. Make sure you get permission to use the comments.

10) Call to Action

Every direct mail letter should end with a few basic elements. First, there should be a money back guarantee. This helps readers feel more secure about ordering a product they've never seen. Second, include an offer. Give the reader an incentive such as a discount or premium item. Finally, invite them to get your product or service today.

Always include a P.S. This gives you an opportunity to restate or summarize the most important points in your letter.



The Idea Corner

Have you been looking for a way to generate more business? Who isn't. If you haven't previously considered using postcards, we recommend you consider it seriously.

Reminder postcards help prevent missed appointments. They also help customers who need to schedule appointments or need to reorder. Postcards work especially well for businesses that work with their customers periodically (e.g. dentists & auto repair shops).

Postcards Boost Profit



Postcards provide great coupon holders. One marketer suggests that postcards containing coupons be small enough to fit into a woman's purse.

Sales representatives often find postcards keep their name in front of customers in a friendly, non-bothersome way.

Postcards also provide a fun, but inexpensive way to say Happy Birthday, Happy Thanksgiving or Merry Christmas.

Many companies design a complete marketing campaign around four or five postcards. When using postcards for marketing, send them on a regular basis (at least every 60 days).

WORDS

A Vocabulary
Of The Graphic Arts

cool colors – Blues, greens, and other colors that suggest cool places or scenes, as compared to warm colors. Cool colors have lower color temperatures than warm colors.

copyfit – 1) To calculate the space that text requires in a specific typeface and point size. 2) To edit writing and adjust typography for the purpose of making text fit a layout.

double post card – Two postcards, one of which is a business reply card, attached by a perforated score so they are easy to tear apart. The two are mailed as one unit so the recipient can remove the BRC and mail it back to the sender.

facing identification marks – Pattern of nine vertical bars at the top of business reply mail that identifies the category of mail to automatic sorting machines.

mechanical – Camera-ready assembly of type, graphics, and other copy complete with instructions to the printer. A hard mechanical consists of paper and/or acetate, is made using pasteup techniques, and may also be called an artboard, board, or pasteup. A

soft mechanical, also called an electronic mechanical, exists as a file of type and other images assembled using computers.

merge/purge – To combine two or more databases (merge), then eliminate duplicate records (purge). Merge/purge usually refers to a function performed by a list house on address lists before mailing.

warm colors – Yellows, oranges, and reds that suggest warm places or scenes, as compared to cool colors. Warm colors have higher color temperatures than cool colors.

Graphically Speaking. Beach, Mark. Manzanita, OR: Elkridge Publishing, 1992



Successful Mailings Require Careful List Selection

Many companies waste hundreds of dollars sending mail to names or addresses that are no good. A few things that can make a name or address no good are: undeliverable addresses, old addresses and untargeted pieces.

Whenever you compose or purchase a mailing list, it's important to check its accuracy. Find out the last time it was updated.

When working with list brokers, ask them how they eliminate duplicates and how they keep their list "clean"

(free of error). Many lists will have a few bad names, but there should be very few. Ask if they provide you with CASS certification. This is certification showing that the names you're using match up to U.S. postal regulations for automation compatible mail.

Untargeted pieces can be just as bad as undeliverable pieces. If people receive mail that they don't identify with quickly, they will usually throw it out.

There are many types of lists available. Where you get the list depends on what type of list you need. For example, if you want a local business

list, you may want to go through the local Chambers of Commerce. A residential list would be available from a broker. When sending to a particular group of individuals (e.g. doctors, gardeners or football fans) you can often obtain free membership lists from related organizations.

Publications are often a helpful place to find business prospects. Many publications have mailing lists available for rent. Some also have a section showing new companies and job title changes.

If you have questions, we'd be glad to help you with your list selection.



I heard that if I made my mail automation compatible I would qualify for a postage discount. What does automation compatible mean and how can I get this discount?

Automation compatible mail refers to mail that is able to be read by an OCR (optical character recognition) machine. It will feature a typed address and a particular address format.

It must also be the right size and shape. Letters must be no larger than 6¹/₈" x 11¹/₂" and no thicker than 1/4 inch.

Another requirement is proof of CASS certification. This shows the postal service that the addresses are accurate.

Our customer service representatives are glad to help you with design questions. You can also obtain several free publications from the U.S. Postal Service.

