



How to increase response to your mailings

You've written THE most stunning piece of direct mail EVER, and your graphic designer has created some awesome visuals to complement it. Wonderful. That's all there is to it, isn't it?

Think again. Aside from the words and the design, there are many other things that affect response rates, and it's important to be aware of these whenever you do a mailing. Read on ...

Timing

When will your prospect be most receptive to your mailing? Some people suggest Monday morning, because people tend to be in the office and they're not yet weighed down by the week. But... you're competing with lots of other mail too. There's no one 'right' time, so keep in mind the likely schedule of the person you're mailing. Also, if you can, find out what stage your prospect is at in their budget/accounting year. If their budget is about to run out, it's difficult to stimulate short-term demand, even with the best mailshot.

Mailing list

How up to date (or 'clean') is your mailing list? Does it target exactly who you need? It's better not to do a mailing at all than to do one with a poor list, however prestigious the source of that list is.

Accuracy of targeting

This is linked to the point about mailing lists. Is your prospect the right person to be targeting? Are they a decision maker or an influencer? Which is better? Is company size important? Is this person's position in the company the right one to aim for?

Evidence for sales/market readiness

Can you be sure that the sales you want are feasible in the marketplace?

Goal/return

Is your target response realistic for this market/product/service?

Telemarketing

Will you have any phone contact with your 'targets' before and/or after they receive your mailing? This generally has a positive impact on response, although it adds to your overall investment.

Economic factors

This is self-explanatory. Will the market support your service/product right now?

Response mechanism

How will people physically respond to your mailing? If you do a large mailing, you'll probably need to put the onus on the recipient to respond – but is it clear what you actually want them to do at this point? And how will you make it easy for them? Should they phone you, email you, send back a reply slip, visit your website, enter a competition – or do something else? Make sure it's clear.

Offer/incentive

What will you offer the reader to nudge them into responding? However much we want to purchase something, we often still need a kick or incentive - a good reason to pick up the phone or make contact right now. What are you offering? It could be a free gift, a free product/service, a loyalty scheme, money off another company's product/service – or something else.

Visual impact

Words and images go hand in hand and each must complement the other. Positive visual impact will often hook someone into reading the words, and the layout of the words themselves needs to be welcoming.

Order value/margin

What order value would represent a worthwhile conversion? How will this affect whom you target – and how you do it?

And finally ...

Enquiry vs. conversion

This last point is more to do with 'after the event', but is equally important to bear in mind. Response to a mailing is measured in terms of new leads. Then, of course, it's up to you to convert them. What level of response can you successfully handle at the moment?

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