



55 Using compelling direct mail

What is direct mail?

Think of direct mail as a sales person in print sent directly to prospective customers by post in the form of a sales letter, flyer, brochure, post card or combination. Its purpose is to sell your products or services.

Why is using direct mail potentially beneficial?

Here are some of the potential benefits of a compelling direct mail campaign.

- It leverages your efforts by getting your message out to thousands in one go.
- It allows you to target with precision by pinpointing the people who fit your psychographic, demographic and geographic profile.
- You can get an immediate response. If your campaign works, you will know about it quickly.
- It can work for you, selling your products and services while you sleep.
- It is a relatively low cost way of getting to large numbers of prospects.
- As it is tangible it can stay in your prospects' homes if they are interested but not ready to buy immediately.

Your challenge

With all the mail that falls on most people's door mat in the morning there is a lot for any mail shot, letter or flyer to compete with. Most mail shots these days generate as little as a one per cent return. If the direct mail piece is not compelling for the receiver, then the chances are it will get put in the bin immediately. Sad, but true.

Direct mail can be a huge waste of time and money if you don't go about it in the right way. Sending out thousands of poorly targeted and poorly written mail shots is a bit like tipping a big bag of £5 notes down a drain. The sending of it does not guarantee a result. If you are serious about making your mail campaign work it will need some considered forethought and precision planning.

Tips on how to get the best result from your direct mail

- Make sure that you send your direct mail to the right people. The key is to have the right mailing list to start with. You have the best chance of getting a response from people who have purchased something similar to what you are selling, people who have money to spend and belong to a group or organisation that have a strong want or need for your product or service. You can purchase mailing lists from list brokers who can help you to identify good lists for your direct mail campaigns.
- Sending a mailing to highly targeted prospects will raise your chance of success. If you are a landscape gardener and you send a mailing to owners of properties with large gardens in areas where there is disposable income, you will have a much better chance of a good response than you would sending it out to a housing estate with matchbox-sized gardens.
- Make sure that your direct mail follows the AIDCA formula already described.
- Use attention grabbers to get people to open it. Be creative and consider something a bit different or unusual that receivers can touch and feel.
- Personalise it if you can.
- Make your mailing look like a letter from a friend by printing your address labels in script or similar and avoiding colourful messages on the outside, which make it obvious that it is direct mail. The less obvious, the better.
- Sequential mailing campaigns get a better response than one-off mailings, as doing this well means that you are able to build a relationship with buyers over time.
- If you follow up a direct mailing with a telephone call you can increase your response rate by 50–100%.
- Don't send out more than you have the resources to follow up, as this needs to be done within a few days of sending the mail shot.
- Hand deliver and test. Another useful trick to getting a better return from your mail shot is to be selective about where you distribute it, and test small batches by hand delivering in the evenings.
- You can introduce your mail by voice broadcast over the telephone or by telemarketing: this can help to set up an expectation for it. Some organisations send competitions in the post as a way of attracting potential customers.

YOUR DIRECT MAIL – SPECIAL RESPONSE CHECKLIST

- ▶ What could you use direct mail for?
- ▶ Who are you targeting? – describe fully.
- ▶ Where can you get the best list of this target group?
- ▶ Check out list brokers.
- ▶ How are you going to approach it?
- ▶ Write your sales letter or direct mail flyer.
- ▶ Test it out on a few potential customers that you know – get some feedback.
- ▶ Set up your test batches and measure and monitor results.
- ▶ Fine tune your direct mail flyer or sales letter.
- ▶ Send out your campaign.
- ▶ Record your response results.

How to use this information

If you think that there could be mileage in running a direct mail campaign, start small and learn as you go. There are lots of useful tips here that you can apply to any campaign large or small.

Think direct mail and get the right offer to the right door