

301

DIRECT MAIL Tips, Techniques & Secrets

**An Inside Guide To
Direct Mail Marketing**

by Bill Myers

301 Direct Mail Tips, Techniques & Secrets

An Inside Guide To Direct Mail Marketing

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Printed in the United States of America

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To The Reader

We had one goal when compiling **301 Direct Mail Tips, Techniques & Secrets** — to put together in a single document the proven methods and inside secrets direct mail pros rely on when they launch new projects.

You can use this book in many different ways; as a creative reference tool, a guidebook, a source of in-



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spiration, even a place to find motivation. You'll likely discover that the proven tips in this book will help in your direct mail projects, as well as in other areas of your life.

This book contains well over 300 pieces of advice, each presented within a chapter covering a specific task associated with a direct mail project. Accompanying each tip is an example or brief description of how to apply the tip in your projects.

Sprinkled among the many tips included in this book are memorable quotes uttered by the great minds in the direct mail business. And whenever we could positively attribute such a quote to a specific person, we did. However, because so many of the best direct mail tips and techniques were developed by experts during the same time frame, it was impossible to directly attribute most quotes.

The information in this book came from a variety of sources — including marketing texts written by the masters and one-on-one interviews with today's direct mail experts, as well as our own longtime personal experience in the direct mail business.



TO THE READER

Our goal when choosing material to include in this book was to select those tips, techniques and secrets that have been tested by time, are backed up by statistical evidence, and apply to a wide range of direct mail projects. We avoided theory and conjecture, concentrating instead on methods that have been proven to work.

While writing this book, we were reminded of many tips and techniques we could use in our own projects to make them more successful. We hope you discover that reading the book does the same for you.

— **Bill Myers**

P.S. Be sure and check out our web site at

www.bmyers.com.

It's a great place to find the latest information about success in direct mail.



How To Use This Book

Most books are meant to be read. This book, **301 Direct Mail Tips, Techniques & Secrets**, is meant to be *used*. We created this book to serve as a permanent reference of the type of information you need when creating and rolling out almost all types of direct mail projects.

Referring to this book often during project devel-



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

opment can be highly rewarding. For that reason, we recommend you not put it up out of the way on your bookshelf, but instead keep it close at hand.

To get the most out of this book, we suggest you use it as follows.

First: Read the book.

The information in the book is presented in the sequence you are most likely to need it. So if you read the book from start to finish, you'll be able to find information you need for each step in the sequence as you require it.

Second: Enjoy the book.

Have fun checking out the 'bytes' of information provided in each chapter. Skim through the pages at random; check out the tips and techniques, and find things you can use immediately.

When you find tips that are especially helpful, use a highlighter pen to note them, and maybe even place a paper-clip or post-it note on the page so you can find it later.



Third: Find the specific advice you need.

By referring to the Table of Contents, you can find help for almost any phase of a direct mail project — from coming up with a product to responding to orders.

When you refer to the Contents page, be sure to read all the chapter titles because you may find information for aspects of your project you haven't considered.





HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Fourth: Jumpstart your creativity.

When working on a project, you may find it very helpful to read sections of the book to help you align your thought process for the tasks ahead. Reading this book is a great way to start thinking like a direct mail pro.

Fifth: Go to work.

The information in this book will do you no good unless you apply it. Start using these tips on your very next direct mail project and see how they can help you produce more professional looking and order pulling projects.

And be sure to review the Direct Mail Project Check List found in Appendix B. This is a complete step-by-step 'pre-flight' check list covering all aspects of creating and launching a direct mail project. I think you'll find it very useful.



Introduction

Junk mail. You hear the term every day. Describing unwanted and unsolicited offers which are delivered through the mail. It seems that we're all overloaded with this stuff.

But every so often, mixed in with this so called 'junk mail,' we occasionally get some good stuff... a letter



INTRODUCTION

or ad about a product or service we've been looking for. A letter that somehow comes at just the right time, offering just the right product, at just the right price.

For most people, finding the occasional worthwhile letter like this usually makes sifting through the piles of junk mail worth the effort.

As a direct mailer, you don't want to be the one sending out junk mail. It is a waste of your time and money, a burden on the post office, and annoying to the recipients.

Your goal as a direct mailer is for your piece to be the one consumers are looking for, the one they are excited to receive.

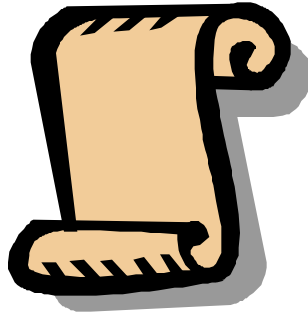
If you make sure your direct mail piece is the one customers are thrilled to receive, you'll be well on your way to earning the profits you deserve.

As you review the information in this book, please keep the advice that follows on the next page in mind.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

It is the duty, as well as the moral obligation, of a direct mail marketer to prepare each offer with the consumer's best interests in mind. Doing so is the only way to achieve meaningful success in direct mail marketing.



Chapter 1

Ten Commandments Of Direct Mail

While there is no guarantee of success in any direct mail project, there are some basic rules you should follow regardless of the type of product you're trying to sell. Following these rules or 'Ten Commandments of Direct Mail,' increases your chances of success while reducing your risk of failure.

If you're ready to take a serious approach to direct mail marketing, commit these rules to memory and



live by them.

First Commandment

Always be honest. Never lie, deceive, or attempt to fool your customers. Give them everything you promise, and more than they expect. The former is required by law and the latter the right thing to do.

Direct mail is not a game where you try to convince people to part with their money. It is a way of doing business where you provide specialized products to individuals seeking those products. Do it right and you will be rewarded. Do it wrong, and you may end up in jail.

Second Commandment

Choose your customers before choosing the product you plan to offer them. There is no way to know what kind of product your customer wants, unless you know who your customer is. Spend the time to first define who you want to sell products to.

Blindly mailing your offer to everyone, hoping someone will respond, is a true sign of a losing proposition (and the cause of most junk mail).



TEN COMMANDMENTS OF DIRECT MAIL

Third Commandment

Choose customers who have the ability, as well as the desire, to purchase products in the price range you'll be selling. Don't insult your customers by offering products that are either too inexpensive for their consideration or too expensive for their pocketbook. Do the research, and you'll know what they are comfortable paying.

Don't make the common mistake of offering products that are too inexpensive. Most consumers won't respond to a direct mail offer for a low priced item.

Fourth Commandment

Choose customers who have a demonstrated history of buying products from direct mail offers. You want customers who are already comfortable buying products through the mail. Convincing people who have never purchased through the mail to do so, is a task you don't want to undertake.

If, in this day and age, a person has not yet ordered something through the mail, you don't want to be the person who tries to convince him to do so.



Fifth Commandment

Offer the exact product your customer wants. Do the research to find out what your customer has recently bought, and how this affects what he or she will want to purchase next.

Knowing what your customers want to buy makes coming up with the right product much easier.

Sixth Commandment

Make it easy for your customers to order. These days customers expect to be able to order through an 800 number and pay with their credit cards.

If you can't offer these services, you're in big trouble. Not having a telephone order number or not being able to accept credit cards will scare off most customers.



TEN COMMANDMENTS OF DIRECT MAIL

Seventh Commandment

Ship orders immediately. Don't make your customers wait weeks or months for a product they've paid for. Ship within 24 hours of the time you take the order.

Eighth Commandment

Offer a money back guarantee of satisfaction. Demonstrate confidence in your product with your guarantee. And if a customer should request a refund, provide it immediately in a courteous manner.

Ninth Commandment

Don't process order payments until you ship the product. If you can't ship immediately, don't cash in customers' payments until you ship. Doing so is morally wrong, and potentially illegal.

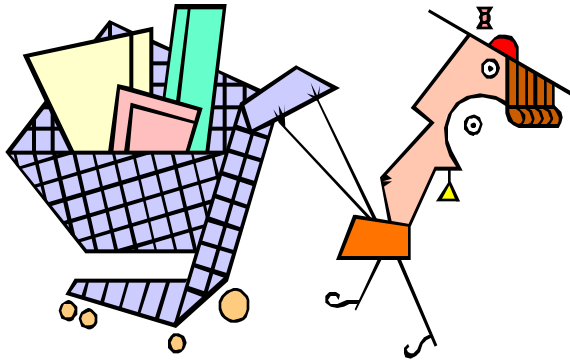
Don't do it!



Tenth Commandment

Keep it simple.

Choose the right product for the right market. Create an uplifting sales letter, and promptly deliver what you promise.



Chapter 2

Choosing The Right Customers

Perhaps the most critical, and most commonly overlooked, aspect of any direct mail project is the selection of people who will receive the mailing. Far too often, newcomers to the direct mail business will expend all their effort in writing the sales letter, then ignore the importance of choosing the right people to send it to.

Successful mailers know that sending a great letter to



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

the wrong mailing list dooms a project to failure. They also know that of all aspects of the project, choosing the right list is usually the most important. That's why the most successful of direct mail marketers take great pains to find quality lists, before they start any project.

Here are some techniques to help you find the right customers to send your direct mail offers to.

Before you start, decide who you want as customers. In most cases, you'll want only those people who have the following characteristics...

1. Have money to purchase your product
2. Are comfortable buying through the mail
3. Open their own mail (no secretaries or assistants to screen it)
4. Have known interests
5. Are available through mailing lists



CHOOSING THE RIGHT CUSTOMERS

If your list fails any of these tests, it is a poor candidate for your project!

There are two kinds of people out there: those who do buy by mail and those who don't. Mailing an offer to people who have never purchased through the mail is a waste of time and money.





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The best customer is one who is 'in heat' for the type of product you have. Typically this is someone who has researched the market and is ready to buy immediately. Seek out these people, and you'll do well.

In order of importance, the success of a direct mail offering depends on:

1. The list the offer is mailed to
2. The sales letter
3. The product
4. The price

For best results, send mail offers only to people who have a proven history of direct mail purchasing. (Verify this history through lists of direct mail buyers.)



CHOOSING THE RIGHT CUSTOMERS

The best source for information on currently available mailing lists? The SRDS Direct Marketing List Source, a huge reference list. Expensive, but worth it. Call 1-800-851-7737 for more information.

Typical mailing list costs are \$85 to \$110 per thousand names. Usually you have to purchase a minimum of 5,000 names.

'Bargain' mailing lists are usually not bargains. In most cases these 'bargains' are compiled from lists of old and stale names.

The three main expenses in mail order: the cost of the mailing list, the printing of the sales letter, and the postage to mail it.



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In terms of expense, typical mailing costs break down as follows.

Names 15%

Printing 25%

Postage 50%

The worst place to cut costs? On the mailing list. Choosing the wrong list usually means the total cost of the mailing (including printing and postage) is money wasted.

Mailing lists can be rented from list owners or list brokers. In most cases it is easier to go through list brokers. (You can find list owners and list brokers in the SRDS directory.)



CHOOSING THE RIGHT CUSTOMERS

When researching a mailing list, look for those containing people who have bought a specific product, in a specific price range, in the last 90 days. Then offer that group a similar or companion product.

When considering a mailing list, always find out the amount the people on the list paid for the product being offered. Use this amount as a guide to what these customers are comfortable spending on direct mail products.

When considering a mailing list, look for buyers, not inquiries. Some lists are heavy on the inquirers, but don't have many actual buyers.



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In most cases, the premium you pay for buyers is worth the extra cost.

Before you rent a list, ask to see the mail piece that generated the list. This way you can see what kind of sales letter generated the names on the list.

When you rent a mailing list, you can only use it for one mailing. You may not reuse the list for other purposes.

Most mailing lists are 'seeded' with names of the list owner and/or broker. This allows them to determine whether you used the list more than once.



CHOOSING THE RIGHT CUSTOMERS

Most list owners require you to submit a sample of your mail piece before they will rent you a list so they can be sure you aren't mailing any objectional or illegal material.

The most responsive mailing lists are usually the 'hot buyers' lists. These are people who have purchased a specific product within the last 30 to 90 days.

The worst mailing lists are 'compiled' lists. These are not much better than a listing of names from a phone book. Most are compiled from several sources, which means very little specific information is known about the buying habits of people on the list.



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The quickest way to lose a lot of money? Mail to the wrong list. Mailing to an unresponsive list can mean the entire amount invested in the mailing was a waste.

The minimum size for a test mailing is usually 1,000 pieces. This can give you an idea of potential response. But you will probably still have to buy a minimum of 5,000 names even if you only use 1,000.

For a higher response, tailor your sales letter to the specific list you are mailing to. Incorporate the information you have about the list in your mail piece. Make mention of things like hobbies, special interests, etc.



CHOOSING THE RIGHT CUSTOMERS

When getting a partial list for a test mailing, ask that the names supplied be randomly selected from the list. This will prevent you from getting all the names from one zip code or a problem area.

And be sure to request that the list owner keep track of the names you get so you don't get duplicate names later on.

On a test mailing, mail First Class so the post office will return undeliverable addresses. If you have a large number of undeliverables, the entire list is probably very old, and may not be worth mailing to.

The older the list, the higher the number of undeliverable addresses. Paying postage on undeliverables can be quite expensive. Avoid mailing lists older than 90 days.



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Mailing lists are generally offered one of three ways:

1. Magnetic tape
2. Printed labels
3. PC format computer disks

Try to get your mailing list in the format you require to print addresses on envelopes.

The absolute best list to mail to is one of customers who have already purchased from you. If you delivered a good product, they are most likely to buy again.



Chapter 3

Selecting Hot Products

To achieve maximum success in direct mail, you need a good customer list, and a good product to offer that list — in that order.

The biggest mistake is to lock yourself into a product, and then ask “Who can I sell this to?” Doing that means you might find the only people interested in your product either can’t afford it, don’t buy mail order, or simply aren’t interested. And that means success is impossible.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

If you start by finding a good mailing list containing people who have specific interests and have a history of buying certain types of products, then coming up with a good product for that list is not too difficult. You simply give them what they want.

Here are some techniques for doing just that.

The best mail order product is one the customer is hot to buy at the time he receives your sales letter.

How to find out what your customers want to buy? Read the Letters To The Editor of magazines that your customers read. Find out what they are talking about and the problems they want solved.



SELECTING HOT PRODUCTS

Also, go to trade shows and hobby fairs. Find out what products customers want, but aren't easily available. (We found one of our most profitable products this way.)

Another way to find out what your customer wants: buy the last major product they did and try to come up with a 'coat tail' product. Something that can help them use the first product. (i.e., a video tape, book, report, or newsletter showing them how to use the first product.)

Don't be afraid to ask your customers what they want to buy. Many companies do this with check boxes on warranty cards and magazine subscriptions.



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The top mail order products of the coming decade:

1. Books, newsletters and reports
2. CD ROMs, computer software
3. Organization memberships

The most profitable mail order products of the coming decade:

1. Organization Memberships
2. CD ROMs, Computer Software
3. Books, Reports, Newsletters

Primary sources of mail order products:

1. Buy from wholesalers
2. Create or produce yourself
3. Use public domain items



SELECTING HOT PRODUCTS

Typical cost to price ratios of mail order products:

Books.....	1:30
CD ROMs.....	1:40
Computer software.....	1:50
Memberships	1:100

Rule of thumb: as a minimum, to be profitable a mail order product needs to sell for at least 8 times its cost. Many successful products sell for 30 times cost or more.

The best mail order products are easy to describe, easy to produce and easy to ship, but not available on the local market. (Don't try to compete with Wal-Mart.)



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Avoid products that require a great deal of customer support. Keep it simple and avoid problems and back-end support expense. (Imagine selling a computer software program to 1,000 customers and then having every one of them call you for help in installing or running the program!)

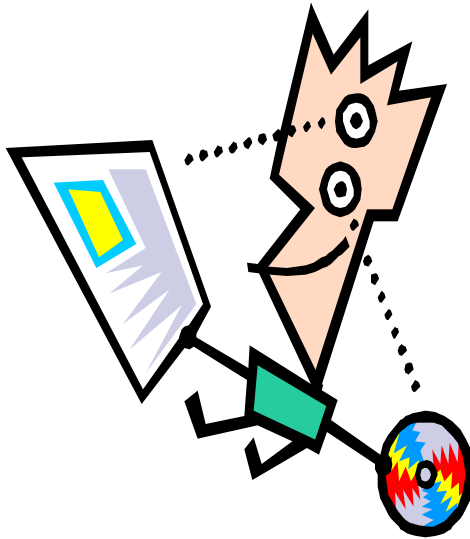
Seek out products that are self-explanatory and don't need operation manuals. A book, report, newsletter, or video tape falls into this category.

Video tapes make good products or premiums... but usually need to be part of a larger package.



SELECTING HOT PRODUCTS

One great source for mail order products and premiums is the U.S. Government, which has for years produced books, reports, videos, and software that fall into the public domain. These can be reformatted to be more attractive and useful.





Another great source for mail order products and premiums is material that entered the public domain when the copyright expired.

Some works have never been copyrighted. These include many popular books, reports, videos, and computer software programs.

Consider ‘reprint and duplication’ rights. Some product developers will sell you the unlimited reprint and duplication rights to their products. This allows you to sell the product as if you created it, without any additional royalty payments.

This is a great way to come up with hot selling books, CD ROMs, and videos — and keep your margins high.



SELECTING HOT PRODUCTS

When you aren't sure whether reprint and duplication rights are available... ask. A product developer may not have considered selling these rights, but many are interested in doing so when asked.

Another good place to find products... successful direct mail offers. If someone is having success selling a particular product, it might be a good idea for you to offer something similar, using the successful offer as a template.

If you are offering information as a product, it should be in a format the customer prefers. If the customer wants print, give them print. If they want video, give them video. If they want CD ROM, give them CD ROM.



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Perceived value is the worth of the product in the customer's mind. It dictates the price a customer is willing to pay.

For books and printed material, the value of the product is determined by the benefit the product delivers to the customers.

Benefits can be time saved, money made, problems avoided, etc. Some books are priced in excess of \$900, and are bargains!

Pricing a product too low will hurt sales. Product price has a lot to do with perceived value. A low priced book or report will have a low perceived value and this will hurt sales.



SELECTING HOT PRODUCTS

Pricing a product higher can increase sales. A high price commands attention, raises curiosity, and stimulates desire. If the product has a high value, let the price reflect that value.

The mail order product is generally composed of several items including:

1. The main product
2. Premiums
3. Free bonus items

The most often used premium? A book, report or newsletter.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

When using premiums, be sure to choose one that fits. The quality of the premium should equal the quality of the product. Including a cheap premium hurts the offer.

The best premium is something the customer wants as much as the product itself.

The worst premium? Something the customer views as worthless. It negatively reflects on the offer.



SELECTING HOT PRODUCTS

When developing the product, consider the box it will be shipped in. Generally the larger the box and the more items packed into it, the higher the customer satisfaction.

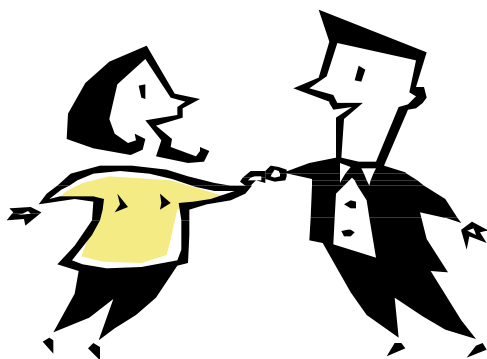
Remember the ‘out of box’ experience... When the customer first opens the box, you want the experience to be pleasant. That initial experience has a lot to do with how many people will return the product.





301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

To make 'out of box' experience most pleasant, be sure to include a cover letter thanking the customer for the order, a list of items enclosed in the box, complete instructions, and a free gift.



Chapter 4

The Psychology Of Customers

Before you start writing your sales letter there are some things you need to know about your potential customers. The most important is simply that they are people. And this means they have a few interesting characteristics and behavior patterns.

What you learn about your potential customer in the next few pages can be used to your extreme ad-



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

vantage. Knowing about and preparing for the customer's general tendencies and behavior patterns before you create your direct mail project can greatly increase your chances of success.

Here are some things you'll want to know about your potential customers, and keep in mind as you construct your sales material.

People are procrastinators. Better give them a good reason to respond now, or they will put it off forever.

People are skeptical. They don't want to believe you, so you must give them a reason to.



THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CUSTOMERS

People are easily confused. And if you confuse them, you lose them. Make everything perfectly clear.

People are lazy (or at least reluctant to take action). Make it very easy for them to order.

People worry about making the wrong decision. Use testimonials to give them assurance.

People generally avoid risk. Reduce their risk by offering a guarantee.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

People don't have the time to read your sales letter. Give them a reason in the headline, and make it an enjoyable experience.

People don't like junk mail. Qualify your audience before you mail so people who receive your offer are interested in it.

People want to know, "Can I believe and trust you?" Follow the high road, write believable copy, and offer testimonials and a guarantee.



THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CUSTOMERS

People move. From home to home, job to job, spouse to spouse. Make sure your mailing list and database are updated frequently.

Once people decide they want your product, they want it now. Be sure to tell them in the letter how quickly they can get it. An overnight delivery option greatly increases orders.



Chapter 5

Understanding The Sales Letter

Of all the forms of print advertising, none has more power to generate action than a well written personal letter. A letter is a person-to-person form of communication, and gives the author plenty of room to fully express his ideas.

Sales letters provide direct and sometimes dramatic feedback on their effectiveness. Responses to mail-



UNDERSTANDING THE SALES LETTER

ings can occur within three days, and the author finds out quickly whether the letter works or not.

If the letter doesn't pull the response desired, it can be reworked and tested again. When a sales letter works, it can be swiftly mailed to thousands, even hundreds of thousands of people.

The speed of the response, as well as the relative ease of reaching consumers with direct mail sales letters, is one reason so many people use direct mail to sell their products and services.

Of course, the hard part is writing an effective sales letter. Here are some tips and techniques to help you do that.

Know what a sales letter looks like. A sales letter generally has several components. These include (in order of importance):

- a. The headline
- b. The P.S.



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- c. Any subheads
- d. Bullets
- e. The body of the letter

Before you write your sales letter, answer this question: What is your primary goal? Is it orders or leads? Your goal should dictate your letter style.

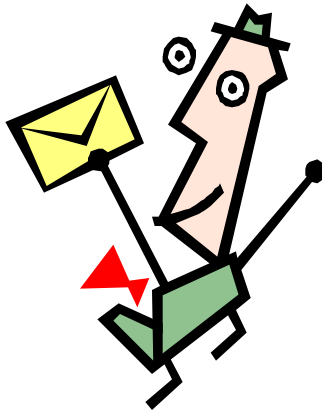
Before you start writing your sales letter, think about those who will receive it. What kind of ‘hot buttons’ will you have to push to get them to read your letter?



UNDERSTANDING THE SALES LETTER

Before writing your letter, create a list of the top concerns of your target market, and then address each item on that list with the benefits of your product.

Before you start writing your sales letter, make a list of all the pertinent facts about the product (competitors' similar products, too) as well as important facts and phrases from past ad copy.





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Before you start your copy, develop a copy platform, or a list of reasons for the customer to buy: benefits and reasons. To do that, answer these questions.

1. Who are you selling to?
2. What want or need in your prospect does your product or service fulfill?
3. What makes your product or service special?
4. What benefits are you offering?
5. What is the most important benefit to your customers?

Use a model. Before writing your sales letter, get an example of a sales letter that was successful in your target market, and use it as a rough guideline for your own letter.



Chapter 6

Getting In The Mood To Write A Sales Letter

When writing anything, it's almost impossible to keep your personal frame of mind from showing up in your writing. Write while you are angry, and your letter will have an angry edge. Write while you are desperate, and your letter will have a desperate undertone. Write while you are happy and confident, and that shines through to your customers, as well.



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To get the most out of your writing, try these tips.

Define the tone you want for your letter (happy, sad, hurried, etc.), before you start.

Don't try to write unless you are in the proper frame of mind for it. Your frame of mind should match the tone you want in your letter.

Don't start writing when you know you don't have time to finish the job.



GETTING IN THE MOOD TO WRITE A SALES LETTER

Don't try to write with a constant stream of interruptions. If you continually lose your train of thought, your customers will see this in the letter.

Don't write in areas where you'll be easily distracted. Choose a quiet area away from the hustle and bustle of the real world.

Create a soothing environment to write in. Get the temperature in your room cool enough to be comfortable, and try playing soft background music (but not radio as the talking will distract you).



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Write with comfortable tools. Don't start a project with a new software program on a new computer. It's hard to stay focused on your writing when you are lost in the program.

Unclutter your mind. Turn off your thoughts about your business and personal life. Don't let these distractions show up in your letter.





GETTING IN THE MOOD TO WRITE A SALES LETTER

Unclutter your desk. It's hard to write with piles of paper spilling on the floor.

Do your research before you write. This way you won't stumble or come to a stopping point for lack of facts that need researching.

When you know you need to write something creative, read something creative first. Put away all your technical books, and read a best selling novel. As you read, you'll subconsciously learn to structure readable writing.



Or read something motivational... get yourself ready to accomplish great things before you start. Read writers who have a style of their own. Syndicated columnists are a great source for interesting styles of writing.

Drink a Coke... the caffeine in a cup of coffee, tea or soda can help get your mood up for writing.

Flip through Bartlett's Book of Quotes... sometimes a great sales letter comes from an inspirational quote. Get a book of quotes and read a few pages right before you start writing.

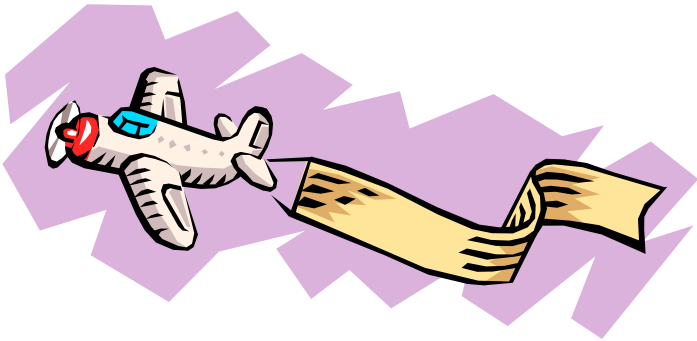


GETTING IN THE MOOD TO WRITE A SALES LETTER

Start... even when you can't get everything just right, start writing. Sometimes you'll discover the ideas begin to flow anyway.

Don't stop... once you've got a good rhythm going with your writing, don't stop until you have to. Get as many thoughts down as possible. Go as far as your energy will take you.

And most of all, keep in mind... you will edit whatever you write (at least once), so don't worry about getting it perfect the first time through.



Chapter 7

Creating Powerful Headlines

The headline is one of the most important elements of your sales letter. A good headline can cause a reluctant recipient to read the letter, while a bad headline can cause the customer to trash the letter immediately.

Coming up with a good headline is one of the hardest, but most rewarding parts of putting your sales



CREATING POWERFUL HEADLINES

letter together. Here are some guidelines to help you give the customer a reason to read your letter.

A good headline compels the recipient to read the first paragraph in the sales letter. And getting the first line read is the first step in getting the entire letter read.

The headline sets the tone of the letter. A good headline creates a positive tone, a bad one puts readers off.

Before you start to write your headline, review at least 50 classic headlines from successful sales letters. This will get you in the frame of thought needed to write a good headline.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Don't try to sell in the headline, instead use the headline as a way to encourage your customer to read the rest of your sales letter.

Keep your headline short and memorable. Make it readable at a glance so customers who don't plan to read your sales letter will still read the headline.

Write a lot of headlines first. Then take the best one for the headline and use some of the really good ones in the body copy.



CREATING POWERFUL HEADLINES

Consider a question in the headline. Asking a question forces the reader to participate in the sales letter. But be careful, the wrong question can turn readers off. Don't ask a question which can easily be answered yes or no.

Make a stunning announcement in the headline... something unexpected and surprising enough to cause your customer to read the rest of the letter.

Promise a specific benefit. Instead of writing that the reader can save money, explain how he can save 45% on his heating bill.



An interesting prediction in the headline attracts attention. People are interested in hearing predictions of things to come, especially if they fit in with the reader's expectations or fears.

Target a specific group. If you are mailing to a known group of people, use it in the headline. Like "Special Offer to Corvette Owners." But be careful, sometimes people don't want to be identified with groups.

Appeal to the customer's curiosity. Make them curious enough about your headline to want to read more.



CREATING POWERFUL HEADLINES

Consider using very large and bold fonts in your headline. This makes it big and unforgettable.

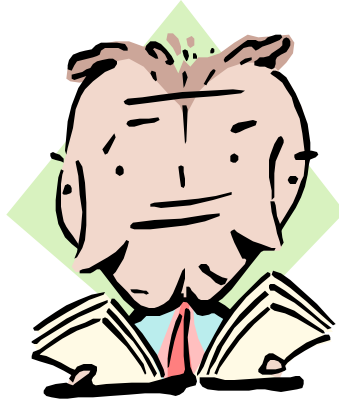
Use a one or two line subhead to further elaborate on the headline.

Use short but powerful words in your headline. Create word pictures.

Avoid 'turnoff' words in your headline. Don't make promises of 'easy profits,' 'quick cash' or other phrases that identify your's as junk mail.



Use an image to amplify the headline. Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words. But be careful in image selection. The wrong image can do much more harm than the right image can do good!



Chapter 8

Phrasing Your Greeting

Before you write the first paragraph of your letter, you'll have to decide on what to use as a greeting, or whether such a salutation is even necessary. Almost all personal letters have a greeting line, and since the most effective direct mail letters are those with a person-to-person approach, this is one of the best ways to add a personal touch.

The problem is deciding which one to use. Here are some tips on how to select greetings, or salutations.



The most effective greeting includes the customer's name. This is particularly important on higher priced items. 'Dear Mr. Jones,' works better than 'Dear Friend.'

When using the customer's name in the salutation, be sure to get it right. Nothing gets a customer more upset than misspelling his or her name.

You can go overboard with personalized salutations. Too much personalized information scares those people who value their privacy.



PHRASING YOUR GREETING

When using the customers name in the greeting, be sure to get the ‘Mr.’ or ‘Ms.’ title right. The worst thing you can do with a salutation is to offend the reader. Avoid incorrect gender specific salutations.

If your mailing list doesn’t include a way to determine this, don’t use it. Instead, try ‘Dear Bill,’ or ‘Dear Bill Myers.’

The main objective when using a greeting line is to make the letter more personal. If you use the customers name improperly, you lose the benefits of using the name at all.



In almost all cases the salutation, “Dear Friend,” is acceptable.

Always use some salutation. Starting a letter without at least ‘Dear Friend,’ instantly depersonalizes the letter. And since the letter isn’t to anyone, no one is compelled to read it.

Dear Friend,



PHRASING YOUR GREETING

The most frequently used salutations are:

- ◆ Dear Friend
- ◆ Dear Customer
- ◆ Dear Reader
- ◆ Dear (name of your company)
Customer
- ◆ Dear Parent
- ◆ Dear (adjective) Friend
- ◆ Dear Member
- ◆ Dear Subscriber
- ◆ Dear Executive
- ◆ Dear Fellow (title)
- ◆ Dear Doctor
- ◆ Dear Investor
- ◆ Dear Home Owner
- ◆ Dear Book Lover



Chapter 9

Writing Dynamic Body Copy

The body copy is the meat of the sales letter. It is where you present the reader your offer, hopefully in a manner that he or she will react to in the way you want (usually by placing an order). Getting your sales letter to work right involves a lot of planning, logic, creative skill and editing.

In this chapter, you'll find many tips that can help you develop the right words to get the customer response



WRITING DYNAMIC BODY COPY

you desire.

Write to an individual, not to an audience. Don't think of yourself as addressing thousands of people; write the letter as you would to one person.

Remember, only one person at a time is reading it.

Tell a story. Use a human interest story to get and keep the customer's attention.

Write in haste, edit at leisure. Write down everything that comes into your head.

Later you can cut and paste, pencil in, and cross out words to your heart's content.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Make your sales letter as personal as possible. Use ‘you’ a lot. But there are exceptions. If you are appealing to an upscale audience, you might play down the ‘you’ factor.

Write in conversational English. Don’t try to write like a author.

Don’t assume your reader knows everything you do. They may be intelligent, but they may not know the subject.

Don’t ‘write down’ to the reader. Instead, know enough about them to write in their language.



WRITING DYNAMIC BODY COPY

Be willing to bend some rules of English. Rules like never ending a sentence with a preposition can be ignored, which will make your copy sound much more natural and human.

Make it appealing to the eye. Format your letter so that the reader can take it in small bites. Short paragraphs, wide margins, and lots of white space make a letter much easier to read.

Avoid too much text on any page. Pages full of text, especially long paragraphs, overwhelm the reader.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Use bullets. Bullets are the best way to get a lot of information across in a eye pleasing way. Plus, customers tend to read and reread bullets.

Keep it interesting. Your letter is not a technical manual; don't make it sound like one.

Stress benefits, not features. Customers are more interested in what the product will do for them than they are in the product's features.

Keep the letter 'you' oriented. Tell the readers the things they want to know, instead of the things you want to say.



WRITING DYNAMIC BODY COPY

Know who you are writing to. It makes a difference whether you are writing to men or women, young or older, poor or rich.

Lead your reader through the letter. Use short sentences, pauses, and bullets to draw your reader deeper into your letter.

Make sure the copy flows. If there is a stopping point in the letter, customers will get off the train (of thought). Once they get off the train, it will be hard to get them back aboard.

Keep it friendly and nonthreatening. Write as if you were talking to a good friend.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Keep it in first person perspective. If you begin writing in the first person, keep it that way throughout the letter.

Keep it simple. Don't use big words, long sentences, or lengthy paragraphs. Your letter is not a college lecture.

Entertain while you educate. Make reading your letters a pleasant experience, and people will follow along from page to page, until the very end.



WRITING DYNAMIC BODY COPY

Break paragraphs at the bottom of a page to create cliff hangers. Give your reader a reason to go to the next page by forcing him to turn the page to finish a cliff hanger paragraph.





301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Use action words and sentences. Action makes your letter come alive.

Paint word pictures by using phrases that create an image in the customer's mind.

Avoid coming across as sterile or impersonal. Don't make your letters sound as if they were written by a machine.

Be believable. Don't make outrageous claims. Your claims should be backed up by proof, fully explained in your copy.



WRITING DYNAMIC BODY COPY

Be logical. Make sure your presentation follows a logical progression.

Be complete. Include everything the customer will want to know about your product.

Arouse a desire. People buy what they want, not what they need.

Eliminate reader roadblocks. Don't include anything that will cause the reader to stop reading or put the letter down. Once they do this, you've lost them forever!



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Eliminate objectionable words or phrases. Some writers unwittingly alienate their readers by using slang or coarse words or phrases that are offensive to others.

Eliminate long and confusing paragraphs or sentences. If you can't say it simply, don't say it at all.

Eliminate extra words. Listen carefully as you have an associate read the letter aloud, and then remove any word or phrase that causes the reader to stumble or question its meaning.



WRITING DYNAMIC BODY COPY

Use testimonials. Include what others have said about your products, using their name or at least their initials, plus home town and state.

Say enough to sell. A sales letter should be long enough to say it all. From 1 to 20 pages or more. It's not long copy if the reader is interested.

Don't be too brief. A short sales letter may not do your product justice.

Don't ask stupid questions. "Doesn't this sound great?" This kind of question gives your potential customer the perfect opportunity to say "No."



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Give each sentence in your sales letter the 'so what?' test. If you can't come up with a good answer to 'so what?' after a sentence, it's weak. Rewrite it or remove it.

Vary the length of your paragraphs. Short ones interspersed with longer ones make the reading more interesting.

Be specific. When making claims or providing information, be specific. Don't round off numbers. Numbers like 87% are more believable than 'over 80%.'



WRITING DYNAMIC BODY COPY

Tie together logical threads. If you have a very low price but it only comes in one color, tie it in, i.e. “Sorry, no other colors offered at this low price.”

If the price is high, use it as a benefit. You might say, “This product is obviously not for everyone, only those who can afford the best.”

Consider giving a free gift even if the customer doesn’t order. This gives customers a reason to call, and many will go ahead and order when they do get someone on the phone.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Don't overlook the mention of the free offer or premium. Adding freebies and premiums really enhances the value of your product, but only if you write about them!

Consider mentioning it near the beginning of your sales letter, or even in the headline.

Sell quality, not price. Don't be tempted to compete on price. When selling through the mail, quality and availability are the issues. Make sure your price doesn't cause customers to question your quality.

Use emotional words, not intellectual ones. Most decisions are made for emotional reasons, not intellectual.



WRITING DYNAMIC BODY COPY

Cut out that ambiguous, anonymous ‘they’ in your letters. Write “I’ll send it to you,” rather than “the merchandise will be sent.”

Watch the ‘we-ness.’ Too much ‘we’ and not enough ‘you’ can cause people to stop reading. Write the letter about your reader, not you.

Connective phrases are much used in direct mail... phrases such as “but that’s not all,” or “but wait, there’s more.”

Put the benefits first. Most experts agree you’ve got to hook ’em in the first half dozen words. Immediately tell the reader how he is going to benefit.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Enlarge on the benefits. Tell the reader what he's going to get and then back up the statements with proof such as endorsements.

If you're selling a book, readers don't care how old the book is. They're not even buying the book itself, but what it will do to improve their lives.

Tell them what they will lose... what they'll miss out on. State your best benefit in the closing, and ask for immediate action.



WRITING DYNAMIC BODY COPY

And tell them what they'll miss... not just what benefits the product has, but the things in life they'll miss out on if they don't buy.

Tell the reader how to order. (Simple advice, but you'd be amazed at how many sales letters don't explain how to place an order!)

Make it easy to act. Don't make the reader sort through a bunch of classifications and instructions. Get them to say yes, then explain all the complications.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Clearly state that you accept credit cards, and which ones. We usually say, “Order today with Visa, MasterCard, or American Express, by calling..”

Offer Next Day Air shipping. It adds credibility to your offer, and customers like knowing they can get the product immediately.

When sending out expensive packages, it’s often wise to make it harder to act, to qualify the customer and keep from wasting money on curiosity seekers.



WRITING DYNAMIC BODY COPY

Tell the reader what to do. Suggest the action to take. Your letter has to lead them to it. You must literally ask for the order.

Stress the need for immediate response, and give a credible reason why.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Make it easier to act by enclosing a business reply or envelope or a reply card with the customer's name already filled in and just requires the prospect to "initial here."

Promise you'll respond quickly, using phrases such as "I'll rush the offer to you," or "It'll be in tomorrow's mail."

Don't forget the **3-2-1 rule**: state an important point **3** times, **2** times, in the middle and again **1** time.



Don't forget the **last chance appeal**, such as "This is your last chance to buy this fine plate at this low price."



WRITING DYNAMIC BODY COPY

Ask for action. The letter should end with a call for action to keep them from fizzling out. Tell the reader what to do. Don't be afraid to tell the customer how to order your product.

Refer back to the headline, when you get to the end of the letter. That's the point that first caught the reader's attention.

Always include a post script. Even if your customer doesn't read the body of your letter, he almost always will read the P.S. Make it work for you.



Add a P.P.S. A second post script gets attention, and gives you extra room to give your customer a reason to read the rest of your sales letter.

When you ask for the order, repeat the offer. If your offer includes lots of premiums, repeat them with a bulleted list when you ask for the order. This way the customer knows what he is getting.

Inject some personality into your letter. Be friendly, try to get across the personality of your company.



WRITING DYNAMIC BODY COPY

It's a sales letter, not an instruction manual.
Make it pleasant to read, not a task the
reader wants to avoid.

Thank the customer for reading your letter.
It's the polite thing to do, and leaves the
customer with a good feeling, even if they
don't order.



Keep in mind these Ten Rules for Copywriters:

1. Write to one person, not an audience
2. Be clear
3. Be convincing
4. Be interesting
5. Don't lie
6. Tie claims to testimonials
7. Promote benefits, not features
8. Create customer confidence
9. Keep it active
10. Ask for the order



WRITING DYNAMIC BODY COPY



Chapter 10

Using Words That Sell

When it comes to writing pages of copy designed to keep a customer reading, one of the best techniques is to include the known power words; those that are most likely to greatly improve customer response. These words and phrases quickly convey information, action, and images, making it easier to write an exciting letter.

Here's a list of the most used of these 'magic' words and phrases:



USING WORDS THAT SELL

- ◆ Free
- ◆ Bargain
- ◆ Now
- ◆ Improved
- ◆ Introducing
- ◆ Just Arrived
- ◆ Save
- ◆ Break Through
- ◆ Send No Money
- ◆ Bonus
- ◆ Gift
- ◆ Valuable
- ◆ Priority
- ◆ Unique
- ◆ Rush
- ◆ The truth about...
- ◆ You



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

- ◆ Miracle
- ◆ Easy
- ◆ Hurry
- ◆ Today
- ◆ How to...
- ◆ At last
- ◆ Limited
- ◆ Opportunity
- ◆ Yes
- ◆ Charter
- ◆ Secrets
- ◆ New
- ◆ Amazing
- ◆ Only chance
- ◆ Announcing
- ◆ Revolutionary
- ◆ Guaranteed



USING WORDS THAT SELL

- ◆ Discount
- ◆ First time ever
- ◆ Special
- ◆ Instantly
- ◆ Discover
- ◆ Forever
- ◆ Premium
- ◆ Sensational
- ◆ Remarkable
- ◆ Revolutionary
- ◆ Startling
- ◆ Miracle
- ◆ Magic
- ◆ Offer
- ◆ Quick
- ◆ Easy
- ◆ Wanted



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

- ◆ Challenge
- ◆ Compare
- ◆ Bargain
- ◆ Hurry

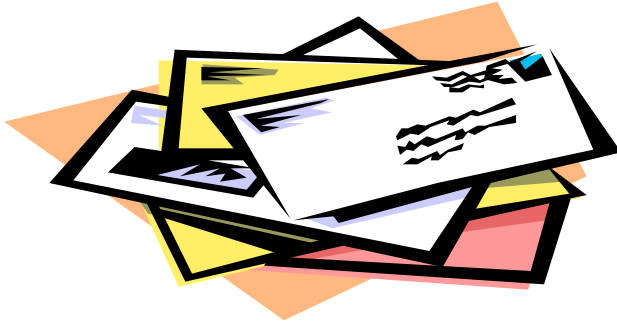
Some tried but true phrases asking for action...

- ◆ Write today
- ◆ Do it now
- ◆ Supply limited
- ◆ Answer by _____
- ◆ Call today
- ◆ Don't delay
- ◆ This is a very limited offer
- ◆ Supplies are limited
- ◆ Once they are gone, they will be gone forever!



USING WORDS THAT SELL

Tip: Watch puff words... like ‘finest,’ ‘incredible,’ ‘best,’ ‘greatest,’ and ‘fabulous.’ Instead use specific words that don’t sound like you are exaggerating.



Chapter 11

Insider's Sales Letter Tactics

Most successful sales letters don't just happen. They are the result of a strategy developed by the sales letter writer with the goal of getting the desired response from the reader.

Developing a good sales letter strategy requires knowledge of the potential customer's wants, desires, needs, hot buttons and previous mail order buying habits. Using this information, a 'plan of attack' is



INSIDER'S SALES LETTER TACTICS

developed, with hopes of winning the customer's attention and ultimately the product order.

Here are some tips on developing a successful sales letter strategy.

Imagine that you could sit and speak to your potential customer for just five minutes. What could you say in those five minutes to cause that customer to place an order?

Chart out the logic you'd use, and the important elements you'd want to cover. Then use that as a starting point for your sales letter.

Get on the customer's side. Open your letter by saying something he or she can relate to. Be sympathetic to their situation in life.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Create a list of the issues that are most important to the customer, the things he will likely be thinking about the day he receives your sales letter. Then use these points to gain the customer's attention and interest.

Make a list of things that might turn potential customers off, making him mad enough to 'tune out.' Then be sure to avoid these topics in your letter and offer.

Always place the customer first. The customer isn't usually interested in your desire to make a profit. He wants to know how you can help him.



INSIDER'S SALES LETTER TACTICS

Sell the major benefit... that is the real product. Paint a picture of the benefits of having and using the product. That's what the customers wants to know. How your product will help him.

Tell success stories... how others are doing with the product. Give specific examples to build confidence.

Drop some names. Tell the buyer who else you're doing business with, the names of well known and respected customers.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Considering showing the product. Doing so builds the customer's confidence that the product actually exists. The customer can see what he is getting. It makes it real. (This is especially true for products with lots of components — a package of books, tapes, CD ROMs, etc.).

Better yet, show someone enjoying the benefits of using the product. But be sure the person enjoying the product fits the customer's profile!

Sell only one product in the letter. More than one product causes confusion.



INSIDER'S SALES LETTER TACTICS

Keep the offer simple. Throw too much at the reader and he won't remember anything. Never introduce the possibility that the customer won't buy. Do not give the reader a chance to think negatively. Avoid saying "if you get this," instead say "when you get your own..."

Look for the hot buttons. Identify the things the buyer is really interested in and work them into your letter. But don't overuse this... customers can recognize a snow job.

Be honest — it's refreshing and gets attention.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Don't put too much technical information in your sales letter, unless you are sending the letter to people who want technical information.

Speak the buyer's language... get to know the buzzwords of his hobby or profession.

Use facts, stay away from cliches and forget the exaggerated benefits.





INSIDER'S SALES LETTER TACTICS

Use a guarantee, the longer the better...
30 days, a year, 10 years, 20 years, 25
years, 50 years and a lifetime.

Give good reasons to buy. When the
reader gets enough reasons that are ac-
ceptable, he makes up his mind to buy.

Move up on the reader's want list. People
give priorities to the things they want to
buy, which means you must compete for
the reader's resources.

To do so effectively, you must create an
irresistible offer. A free gift or an add-on
often makes a big difference in the re-
sponse rate.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Sweeten the offer. Throw in something else. We call it 'piling on.' Once you have the reader excited about the product, then reveal all the extras he gets when he orders from you. Usually these include free books, reports, video tapes, etc.

If your presentation is too short... a brief, one page or less letter might subconsciously make the reader think your cause or product is not very worthy or important.

Always give the price.



INSIDER'S SALES LETTER TACTICS

But hold off on naming the price until later in the letter, unless you are making a big deal about the price. Then you might approach it early in the letter. You might even put it in the headline.

An incredible price? If your principal sales argument is the extremely low price, the reader might feel no one would sell anything of quality for anywhere near that price. In mail order, low prices usually mean less sales.

Promise 'Rush' delivery. When people want something, they want it now.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

If you can ship in a hurry, say so, with something like, “We ship within 24 hours.” Such a guarantee increases orders but will also hurt you if you don’t live up to the promise.

Economy or deluxe? Consider offering two versions of the same thing. Either the basic model or the deluxe. In most cases, the customer will order the deluxe.

Some things that add to your credibility: how long you’ve been in business, customer’s testimonials about your product, awards it has won, high quality materials, bank or credit references, and your money back guarantee.



INSIDER'S SALES LETTER TACTICS

Don't be clever for the sake of being clever. The product is the star, not the writer.

Put the best argument last. Some experts say when listing a series of arguments list the most desirable one last and the next most desirable first. People remember the last name longest, the first name next longest.

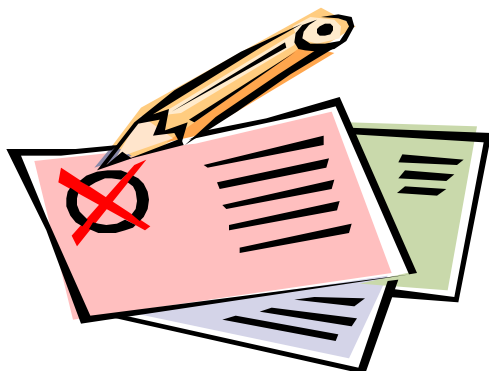
How many mailings? The higher the price tag, the more mailings, but three mailings is the standard. Generally if someone is going to order, they'll order by the third mailing.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

When doing multiple mailings to the same person for the same product, vary the content and headline of the letter. Don't send the same letter three times; doing so can make you look incompetent.

When mailing a series of follow-up letters... seek continuity in those letters, possibly referring to something said in previous letters.



Chapter 12

Order Form Secrets

In years past, most customers placed their orders using a form mailed back to the company offering the product. These days however, most customers prefer to use the telephone to order products.

Still, the order form can be a very valuable part of the offer. It can be used to close the sale, reemphasize the benefits of the product, and present the guarantee.

Here are some tips to help you design and use the order form.

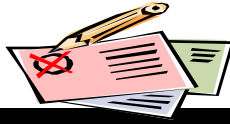


301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

When designing your order form, don't be too formal. Keep it simple and friendly with no small print or stumbling blocks.

Even on the printed order form, encourage phone sales. Say "For fastest service, call..."

Avoid the words 'buy' and 'pay' on your order forms. These words are a little painful. Instead, use phrases like "Send me," "Please rush my," and "Bill my charge card."

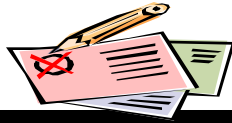


ORDER FORM SECRETS

Use the order form to reinforce the sale. Repeat the offer and use bullets to list everything the customer is going to get upon placing the order.

If you include an order form, be sure to include an order reply envelope. Make it easy for customers to send orders in.

Never make the customer buy the stamp. Make sure your reply envelope is postage paid. Don't lose an order because you were too cheap to pay the postage.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

On the order form, be sure to use words like 'expedite' and 'rush,' so your customer knows that you value the order and will get his product shipped quickly.

Include your money back guarantee on the order form. This builds customer confidence in your company and product.

Use check boxes on the order form. These boxes are inviting to check off, and make it easy for your customer to make a decision.



ORDER FORM SECRETS

Give them plenty of room to write. Don't skimp on space for the customer name and address. Leave plenty of room for customers to write the information you need, especially a credit card signature.

Ask your customer to print information on the order form. It can be very difficult to read hand writing.

Asking the customer to print name and address, etc. makes it easier for your order entry person and cuts down on misspelled names and incorrect street addresses.

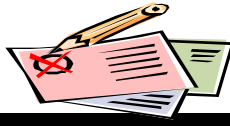


301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Always include room for country information. This encourages overseas buyers. Also, include a phone number that international customers can call to place orders.

Along with their name and address, ask for the customer's phone number. This allows you to contact the customer if there are any questions. (Especially important if you accept credit card orders.)

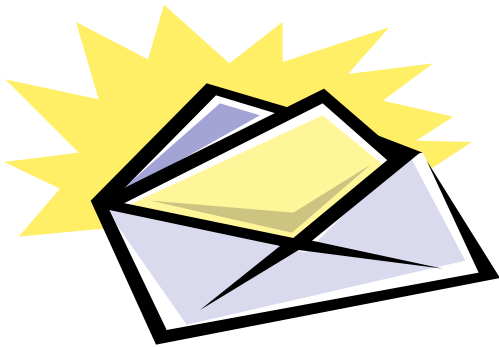
Always include your phone number on the order form. This makes it easy for customers to contact you should they have any questions while filling out the order form.



ORDER FORM SECRETS

Consider eliminating the order form altogether. Encourage customers to order by phone by offering a special bonus when they do so. Most customer prefer to order by the phone anyway.

When including an order form, make it a separate sheet of paper. Don't have it printed within the body of your letter.



Chapter 13

Getting The Envelope Opened

In times past, getting a letter was an important event, something the whole family celebrated. These days, consumers are not nearly as enthusiastic about the mail they receive. In fact, many make it a practice to simply discard what they perceive as unsolicited sales letters.

To succeed as a direct mail marketer, your sales letter must be opened and read by your customer. If



GETTING THE ENVELOPE OPENED

your letter ends up unopened in the trash, everything is lost. Here are some tips to increasing the odds of getting your letter opened.

Most people sort their mail into two stacks. In one stack is mail they open immediately, and in the other is mail they regard as unimportant. Strive to get your mail into the ‘open immediately’ pile.

If your sales letter is your salesman, the envelope is his clothing. Dress him fittingly.

Use real stamps on your envelopes, even on bulk mail. Real stamps make the envelope look like a personal letter.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

One way to get your mail opened... don't reveal on the outside what the letter is about. Make the reader open it to find out.

Raise reader curiosity by using a blind return address. Give your address but not the company name. This makes the recipient wonder who is sending the letter and what's in it.

Use an 'teaser' line on the envelope only when you are certain that the teaser will cause the reader to open the envelope. In too many cases, a teaser clearly identifies the letter as a sales letter, and causes the recipient to throw it away unopened.



GETTING THE ENVELOPE OPENED

Typed addresses... letters that look like they were addressed with a typewriter stand out over envelopes with computer labels.

Even more powerful than typed addresses are envelopes that look like the address was handwritten. This gives the letter an extremely personal look, and the more personal the mail looks, the more likely it is to be opened.





To get the hand-addressed look without all the work, find a printer or letter shop that can use their computer to apply hand-addressed looking fonts.

If you use a computer to hand address your envelopes, be careful about using bar codes or anything else on the envelope that will take away from the personal look.

For maximum effect, 'hand address' the envelopes using a blue ink. The blue ink makes it look even more like actual handwriting.

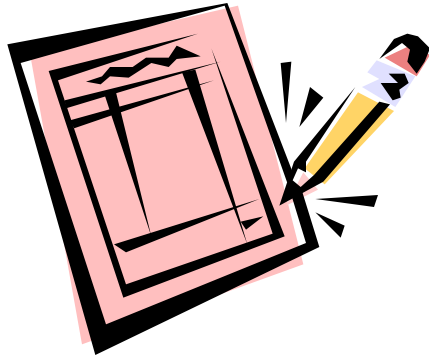


GETTING THE ENVELOPE OPENED

Avoid using computer printed labels to address your envelope when trying to create a personal appeal. A computer generated mailing label clearly identifies your mail piece as a mass mailed sales letter, and will quite often cause your letter to get thrown away unopened.

Avoid addresses in all upper case. These clearly identify your mailing as 'junk mail.'

Consider using a window envelope. This allows you to personalize the mailing inside and out in one single step.



Chapter 14

Layout For Maximum Sales Impact

Sales letter layout and design is almost as important as the actual word content of the letter. A poorly designed letter reflects badly on the product being offered, and causes the reader to lose confidence in the company offering the product. If the letter looks unprofessional, the reader assumes the company sending it is unprofessional.



LAYOUT FOR MAXIMUM SALES IMPACT

A lot goes into getting the right look to your sales letter. Here are some tips and techniques that can help you get the look that increases sales.

Start by looking at other successful sales letters. Examine each element closely: the envelope, the method of addressing, the return address, the paper quality of the letter, the number of pages, the font size, margins... everything! It's all important, and each element makes a difference.

Don't be cheap. When it comes to envelopes and paper, use a better quality than your competitors; it makes you look more successful.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Use readable fonts and font sizes. Depending on your intended audience, use either an 11 or 12 point font size. Smaller fonts are more difficult to read and discourage readers.

If you typeset your letter yourself, use a professional publishing program such as PageMaker, Quark, or Ventura. These give better results than word processors.

To get the most professional look, make sure your leading (line spacing) and kerning (letter spacing) is right for the font you are using. Most top end publishing programs handle this automatically.



LAYOUT FOR MAXIMUM SALES IMPACT

Serif or sans serif? Tests show that the response is better in sales pieces when serif fonts like Times Roman or Century Schoolbook are used.

The magic of a typewritten letter... a letter that appears to have been typed seems more urgent.

When writing a personalized computer letter, personalize it no more than you would a letter you were typing by hand.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

For a two-page computer letter, use two separate sheets of paper. Don't print on the back of a single page. This cheapens the offer, and reflects poorly on the product.

Don't use non-standard fonts. Customers expect a certain level of professionalism in your letter. Don't let them down by specifying an unusual font or font size.

Use page numbers on all pages except page 1. Page numbers add a professional touch, and make it easy for your printer to get the page order correct when printing.



LAYOUT FOR MAXIMUM SALES IMPACT

At the bottom of each page include the phrase, “please go to next page.” This encourages readers to keep reading.

Use a logo, especially on your order form. Even the simplest logo gives your written materials a professional look. It’ll also be easier for the reader to recognize your letter or package when it arrives.



Pelican Products
12 Ocean Boulevard
Majestic Point, CA 11111



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

If you underline... be very sparing. Too much underlining makes the letter hard to read and cheapens the product.

To make an important sentence stand out, make it the only sentence in the paragraph between two longer paragraphs.

White space... try to have more at the top of the letter than the bottom. Go for lots of short paragraphs and wide margins to make the letter more attractive.



LAYOUT FOR MAXIMUM SALES IMPACT

Stretch it to the next page. When you get to the bottom of a page, stretch the copy to the next page, leaving a lot of white space on the ending page.

To indent or not to indent... most sales letters are indented and experts claim the results are better.

Stick with the most legible color combination... black ink on white paper.

Colors are a no-no... using colored paper in a sales letter creates a 'carnival' atmosphere, something that in most cases, you don't want.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Always sign a sales letter with a real person's name. This continues the personalized feel. Much better than no signature, or a company name.

Sign in blue ink... for greatest impact, have your letters signed in blue ink. This adds only minimal costs to printing, but adds greatly to the perception of a personal letter.



Chapter 15

Printing The Package

The printing of your sales letter is an area where a simple mistake can be costly in terms of added postage and decreased consumer response. Fortunately, if you use a professional printer and follow a few guidelines, you can eliminate most problems before they occur.

Here are some tips and techniques to help you get through the process of having your masterpiece duplicated.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Before you take your letter to the printer, have it proofread by several different people. Make sure there are no grammatical errors, misspelled words, or logic bombs.

Before you take your letter to the printer, make sure you have included a phone number so people can order the product. And make sure the phone number is correct!

Before getting the letter and envelope printed, weigh a sample, using the same paper it will be printed on. Just a fraction of an ounce can double the cost of your postage. On a large mailing this can prove disastrous.



PRINTING THE PACKAGE

In most cases, a four page letter is printed on a single 11x17-inch sheet of paper. Eight pages is printed on two 11x17 pages.

If printing a letter on 11x17 (folded), balance your letter so it fills the first three pages fairly evenly, with any extra white space on the last page.

When selling very expensive items, consider printing on just the front side of single sheets of paper.

This raises printing and postage costs, but gives a much more personalized and image-conscious touch.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

When looking for a printer, get at least three different price quotes. Some printers work cheaper during periods when their presses would normally stand idle.

When getting price quotes for printing, be sure to get quotes for folding the letter and stuffing it into the envelope. In many cases, folding and stuffing can be more expensive than printing.

In printing, remember you'll get the greatest discounts on volume. The price per piece for a 5,000 unit printing will be significantly lower than the price per piece on a 1,000 unit printing.



PRINTING THE PACKAGE

When you ask for print quotes, also ask to see examples of similar jobs the printer has done. Make sure these jobs reflect the kind of quality you want.

Before turning your order over to a printer, be sure the printer can produce the letter within your time frame.

When creating masters on your laser printer to give to your printer, use premium quality laser paper (white brightness 90-91).

Before printing masters on your laser printer, clean your printer, and use a fresh toner cartridge.



For best quality, print your masters at 600 to 1200 DPI quality. Anything less than this will look amateurish.

When working with your printer, be sure to show him how you want your letter folded. Usually you'll want the headline to be the first thing the customer sees.

If you're including multiple items in your letter package, fold them so they don't drop on the floor, or remain in the envelope when the letter is removed.



PRINTING THE PACKAGE

When selecting envelope quality, choose an envelope paper thick enough so the print of the letter can't be read through the envelope.

When choosing paper quality, choose paper thick enough so that print does not bleed through from the front to the back of a page.

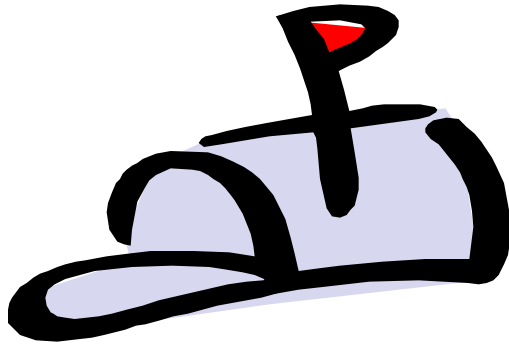
Before accepting the finished job from your printer, be sure to visually inspect the work.

Make sure the pages of the letter are printed in the correct sequence, the quality of the ink and paper are acceptable, and the fold is correct.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

If a problem occurs in printing ... reprint. It is cheaper in the long run to reprint a sales letter than it is to mail one with errors.



Chapter 16

Profitable Mailing Strategies

The final step in getting your sales letter to your customer is mailing it. This is a relatively simple process, where little can go wrong. However, things can and do go wrong during mailing.

Fortunately, there are some things you can do to make the mailing process work in your favor. Here are some guidelines for that.



Timing is important. Send your mail when your customers are most likely to read it, and are most likely to buy. Time your mailing to reach people at peak buying times.

Timing is important, Part Two. Avoid sending mail when your customers will have other things on their minds. Don't let your letter arrive right before tax time, or the first of the month, when the bulk of customers' monthly bills are due.





PROFITABLE MAILING STRATEGIES

Timing is important, Part Three. When sending Third Class mail, drop it at the post office early in the week and early in the day. It is more likely to get processed correctly this way. Above all, avoid dropping mail on Friday afternoons. It could get misplaced, or delayed until the first of the week.

Timing is important, Part Four. The best selling months for mail order... October, November, September, January, February and March.

The worst months to mail... July, August and December.



On small mailings, or test mailings, send it First Class. It looks less like junk mail, gives you a faster turnaround on response, and with First Class you get free mail forwarding.

Another big plus when using First Class stamps: you get all undeliverable mail returned to you. This is important when using a mailing list, and gives you an idea of how many undeliverables are on the list.

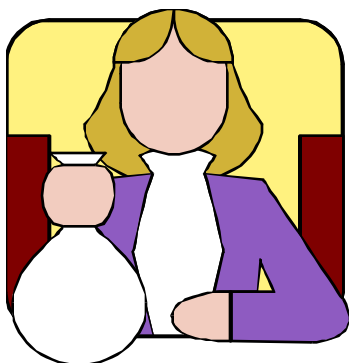
Whether mailing First or Third Class use real stamps. Colorful stamps make the mailing look less like junk mail. Even Third Class Bulk Rate now offers a colorful live stamp.



PROFITABLE MAILING STRATEGIES

Always mail your sales letter to yourself before doing a large mailing. This will give you a good idea of what your letter looks like when the customer gets it.

Watch your weight. Nine pennies on a scale is exactly one ounce and this is a cheap way to check your postal scales.



Chapter 17

Increasing Your Profits

There are a number of steps you take during the rollout of your mailing to increase response and profits. Here are a few strategies for adding to the bottom line.

When answering inquiries, always include a cover letter thanking the customer for their inquiry letter.



INCREASING YOUR PROFITS

When you speak to satisfied customers, ask them to send comments you can use as testimonials. Add these to a file for future use.

If you find a list that has acceptable response, try mailing to it again with the same offer. Generally you'll get a greater response the second and third mailings.

If the first mailing just barely pays for itself... the second mailing typically needs to pull only one-fifth of the response to pay out.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Include a 'back-end' offer when you ship the product. This is usually an offer for a product the customer will want that goes well with the product he has purchased.

Turn customer inquiries into information. If many people ask the same question, that question should be addressed in the sales letter when you rewrite it.

Work customer suggestions into product features. When several customers ask if the product can do a certain thing, make sure you highlight this certain thing when you rewrite the sales letter.



INCREASING YOUR PROFITS

Use information from the test mailing to help create a more responsive sales letter. The test mailing is designed to show you the good and bad points of your offer. Using customer feedback, edit the letter, and re-mail to the same list.

When you create a project that works, keep mailing it. Direct mail is a numbers game. Once you get the response rate in your favor, expand the project to additional mailing lists.

Put successful projects on autopilot. Once a project is proven to be successful, set up a system to continually mail out the letters and respond to the orders.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Don't let it go stale. Be sure to review the product and sales letter often. This gives you a chance to update the sales letter and increase product quality.

Take advantage of volumes of scale. As your mailing size increases, be sure to get new quotes for printing and fulfillment services. Often you'll get substantial discounts for volume.

Keep track of customer order inquiries. The best customers for your next product will be people who purchased your last product. Keep track of their names.



INCREASING YOUR PROFITS

Send follow-up mailings or newsletters to customers who purchase from you. This increases product satisfaction and provides a good way for you to announce new companion products they might be interested in.

Product returns are normal, even expected. Some people make it a habit of ordering products, knowing they will return them. This is not a big problem.

When products are returned, find out why. Ask the customer to write you a note explaining why the product is being sent back. This is especially important on test mailings.



301 DIRECT MAIL TIPS, TECHNIQUES & SECRETS

Keep track of why products are being returned. In most cases, the problem can be quickly remedied, if you know what the problem is.

Most products are returned because they don't meet the expectations the sales letter created. You can fix this by making sure the customer gets more than they anticipated.

If product returns are greater than 5%, stop mailing the sales letters until the problem is fixed. Otherwise, you could find yourself paying more in refunds than is coming in from sales.



INCREASING YOUR PROFITS

Don't give up. If your test mailing didn't work, find out why, and fix it. In most cases the reason direct mail projects fail is one of the following:

1. Wrong mailing list
2. Wrong product
3. Weak sales letter

Find out in which area your weakness is in, and fix it. (It is most likely your mailing list.)



Appendix A

Mail Order Basics

From time to time, we all need a refresher on the basic building blocks of mail order success. As you learn more through rolling out new projects, you will see new dimension and greater subtleties in the underlying principles of direct mail marketing.

So, review this chapter occasionally. Consider it part of your continuing education in direct mail success!

MAIL ORDER BASICS

The three traditional, basic mail order products:

1. Merchandise
 2. Services
 3. Printed information
-

There are two distinctly different mail order markets... there is mail order for product (Sears is in that business), and mail order for people in mail order, ‘opportunity seekers.’ These are two separate markets.

The customer’s unspoken message, which any sales letter must answer, “What’s in it for me?”

The average direct mail package contains:

1. Outside envelope
2. Return envelope
3. Sales letter
4. Brochure
5. Order form

Convenience is one of the greatest motivators to buy through the mail. Not necessarily because it's cheaper, because generally it isn't cheaper.

A direct marketing rule: Figure out beforehand how much you can afford to spend to obtain each order.

MAIL ORDER BASICS

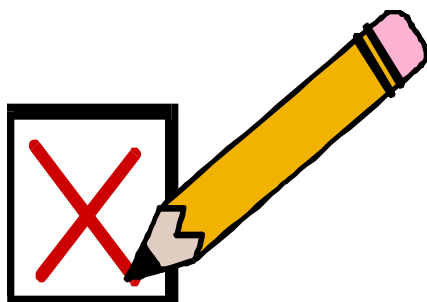
Know your order margin... the most you can spend to get an order and still break even after all the expenses are paid.

Know in advance who you'll sell your product to and how you'll sell it. Never decide what to sell, then try to sell it.

Remember what you're selling... people don't want to buy books, per se, they want to buy results. They want to make some dramatic improvement in their lives.

It's not how many that buy. In direct mail, it's how much money people are willing to spend on items, rather than how many total items are sold. In some cases, (say a \$2 million yacht) a single sale might make a handsome profit.

Choose quality over quantity. In direct mail, it's usually easier to get ten \$100 orders than a hundred \$10 orders. Plus, the fewer number of orders needed for the same profit means lower overhead and expense.



Appendix B

New Project Check List

Before starting any new direct mail project, we go through a check list to be sure that we've done our homework. This helps establish that the chances for success with this project are high, as well as ensuring that we're not over-looking a vital step in the process.

You'll notice the check list reflects our 'market driven' philosophy. This means we always identify

the market, or group of people we will be selling to, before we come up with the product to sell them.

This technique allows us to always choose markets where customers have money and have already demonstrated a repeated habit of buying products through the mail. By concentrating on proven markets, we've eliminated most of the obstacles to success in any direct mail project.

Once we've found a market where we know the people have money, all we have to do is find out what these people want to buy, and then give them an opportunity to buy it from us.

Many people who get into direct mail are 'product driven.' They come up with a product and then ask themselves, "Who can I sell this to?" If you have to ask yourself that question, you're in trouble. It means rather than giving people what they want, you're going to try to force them to buy what you've got (regardless of what they want!).

Convincing people to buy something they don't want is an uphill battle. It's a loser's game. Don't waste your time, unless you just enjoy frustrations and failure!

Direct Mail Project Check List

The Market

- Have we defined the target market? (Do we know who we want to sell to?)

- Do the individuals in our target market have credit cards? (If not, they can't buy from us!)

- Have the individuals in our target market demonstrated a habit of buying items through the mail? (We want people who already like buying through the mail!)

- Have the individuals in our target market made a recent mail order purchase of an item priced in the same range as our product? (Have they demonstrated they will pay our price for direct mail products?)

- Have we identified the 'hot buttons,' the things that motivate people in our target market to make direct mail purchases? (Knowing these sure would make selling them something a lot easier!)

- Do we know what the people in our target market want to buy right now? (Based on their past buying habits and current lifestyle.)

- Do we know the age, sex, and general philosophy of our target market? (Are they men, women, young, mature, liberal, conservative, working, retired, or what?)

- Do the individuals in our target market open their own mail? (Or do they have assistants who do it for them?)

NEW PROJECT CHECK LIST

- Can we buy a good mailing list (of recent mail order buyers) for our target market?

Notes

The Product

- Is this a product the market wants to buy? (People buy what they want, not what they need!)

- Does this product stand out as being unique, with limited availability? (We don't want to compete with Wal-Mart or big mail order catalog houses. We want to be the only source for this product!)

- Does this product say 'high quality?' (If not, find something else to sell! We want to be known for having quality products, nothing else!)

- Is this product available to us in quantity? (We don't want to send out 100,000 letters and get 3,000 sales, only to find out we can get no more than 300 of the product!)

NEW PROJECT CHECK LIST

- Is this product available to us at a cost that will allow us to make a reasonable profit?

- Is this product UPS shippable?

- Have we actually examined a sample of the product to be sure that it really meets our requirements?

Notes

The Project

- What is the real reason we are doing this project? (To make money? To learn new skills? To break into a new market? To satisfy our ego?)

- Have we set up a way to identify and track all expenses we incur during the research, development, testing and roll-out of this project?

- Have we run the figures on this project through our direct marketing risk vs. return spreadsheet module to see if this thing is worth our time?

- Do we know the break-even point in sales for this project? (And is it low enough that we can recover our investment even if the project is not successful?)

NEW PROJECT CHECK LIST

- Can we afford to develop and test this project without borrowing money? (Never borrow money on a speculative project... especially a direct mail venture!)

- Is this kind of project going to have a negative impact on our personal relationships, physical or mental health, or business reputation? (Sometimes it's better to just say 'no.')

- Do we have time to pursue this project? (Or will it conflict with other commitments we can't get out of?)

- Have we set a timetable to actually implement each phase of this project? (And does the timetable take into account the seasonal fluctuations in the buying habits of our target market?)

Have we contacted all the resource people we will need to get this project under way to be sure there are no hidden land mines? Resource people include:

___ List broker

___ Copywriter

___ Typesetter

___ Graphics artist

___ Print shop

___ Product source

___ Order taking service

___ Others

NEW PROJECT CHECK LIST

The Offer

- Is the offer written to appeal to the 'hot buttons' of our selected market?

- Is the offer written to correspond with market demographics? (Males, females, young, mature, liberal or conservative, etc?)

- Does the offer compel the recipient to read it, and is it easy to follow and understand?

- Does the offer make the reader want to buy?

- Is the price 'right' for this product to this market? (Most people underprice products!)

- Is there a money-back guarantee?

- Does the offer include free premiums to increase the perceived value of the offer?

- Is there anything about the offer that could in any way adversely affect the consumer's confidence in the company making this offer? (Remove all the reasons not to buy!)

- Is the offer professionally typeset?

- Is the order line phone number easy to find in the offer, and is it correct?

- Is the return address on the envelope?

- Is there a 'back-end' to the offer?

NEW PROJECT CHECK LIST

Fulfillment System

- Are we set up to accept phone orders for this product? (85% of mail orders will be placed over the phone!)

- Can we process Visa, MasterCard, and American Express? (90% of orders will be paid for with credit cards!)

- Are our phone lines answered during the hours our customers are most likely to order? (Have we taken into account the various time zones across the country?)

- Does each person taking orders know enough about the product and offer to build customer confidence on the phone?

- Have we set up a procedure to fulfill and track each order we get for this product? (Do we have a good paper trail, and computer data base set up?)

- Do we have sufficient quantities of the right size box and any other packing materials needed to ship this product?

- Do we know the exact costs to ship this product? (And have we factored this in our break-even analysis?)

- Are we paying shipping or is the customer? (This should be clear to the customer!)

- Is this product likely to have many returns? (If so why, and why haven't we fixed the problem?)

NEW PROJECT CHECK LIST

- Have we actually shipped a product to ourselves just as our customers would receive it, and are we satisfied with the way it looked when we received it?

Notes

Project Test

- What size of test mailing are we planning? (1,000 piece is absolute minimum; 5,000 over multiple lists is better.)

- Have we ordered the mailing list on tape so we can do an in-house check on the validity of the list before we mail? (Using the wrong list, or a bad list, will provide unreliable test results, and can wreck the project!)

- Are we mailing our test First Class or Bulk Rate? (If we are mailing Bulk have we taken the steps to insure that the test actually gets mailed?)

- Have we alerted our order entry people that the test is about to begin? (Are the order forms ready?)

NEW PROJECT CHECK LIST

- What day are we mailing our test? (It makes a difference; we usually mail on Monday or Tuesday.)

- If we are mailing to multiple lists, have we set up our order entry so we can find out which list is producing the order?

Notes

Analyzing Test Results

- Did we get any orders for the product?
- Did we get enough orders to reach the break-even point for the costs of the test?
- Did we discover any problems in order taking or product fulfillment processes?
- Did we discover any hidden costs we had not figured on in the test?
- Were there any questions that customers frequently asked about the offer? (If there were, we need to address these in the offer.)

NEW PROJECT CHECK LIST

- If we did not get enough orders from the test, are we going to try to figure out why this test did not work, fix it, and then test again?

- Are we being honest with ourselves about the test results? (Or do we want success so bad, we are blind to reality?)

Notes

Project Roll-Out

- If the test was good, are we following up with a substantial mailing? (Many people don't!)

- If we are following up with a substantial mailing, are we going to drop all the letters at the same time, or are we going to spread the mailing to accommodate our order taking and order fulfillment resources?

- Can we handle taking and fulfilling orders if the response rate on the roll-out is substantially greater than on the test?

- Are we continuing to track the income and expenses from this project?

NEW PROJECT CHECK LIST

- Are we setting aside money in our bank account to take care of possible returns?

- Have we set up a plan to roll out this offer on a long term basis?

- Are we developing a plan to work the back-end?

- Are we ready to go look for our next project?