

Small Business “BIG” Profits

BONUS REPORT #4:

**“55 Hot Tips For Boosting The Pulling
Power Of Your Direct Mail”**

By Bob Serling

“Boosting The Pulling Power Of Your Direct Mail”

Copyright Notices

Copyright © 2002 by The Internet Marketing Center
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical or electronic, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission or further information should be addressed to The Internet Marketing Center, 1123 Fir Avenue, Blaine, WA 98230.

Published by The Internet Marketing Center
1123 Fir Avenue
Blaine, WA 98230

Phone: (604) 730-2833
Fax: (604) 730-2480

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

Legal Notices

While all attempts have been made to verify information provided in this publication, neither the author nor the Publisher assumes any responsibility for errors, omissions or contrary interpretation of the subject matter herein.

This publication is not intended for use as a source of legal or accounting advice. The Publisher wants to stress that the information contained herein may be subject to varying state and/or local laws or regulations. All users are advised to retain competent counsel to determine what state and/or local laws or regulations may apply to the user's particular business.

The purchaser or reader of this publication assumes responsibility for the use of these materials and information. Adherence to all applicable laws and regulations, both federal and state and local, governing professional licensing, business practices, advertising and all other aspects of doing business in the United States or any other jurisdiction is the sole responsibility of the purchaser or reader.

The author and Publisher assume no responsibility or liability whatsoever on the behalf of any purchaser or reader of these materials.

Any perceived slights of specific people or organizations are unintentional.

Boost The Pulling Power Of Your Direct Mail With These 55 Hot Tips:

Direct mail has to be the most exciting area of marketing. The results of a winning mailing are truly thrilling. Few things can compare with opening your mailbox to find a flood of envelopes filled with orders and checks made out to you!

And if you can increase the response to your offer by just a fraction of a percent, you can turn a slight profit into windfall profits.

So one of the key questions marketers have always asked is, “How do I increase the response to my mailings?” In this report, I'll show you 55 excellent techniques for making sure your mailings pull a stronger response.

Not all of these techniques will work for every mailing you create. The key is to review the techniques whenever you're planning a mailing. Pick the ones that apply to your situation and put them to work. Your bank account will be glad you did!

1. Carefully target your audience.

Sales volume can be directly connected to your ability to accurately identify your most likely customers. If necessary, create different versions of your package tailored to each specifically targeted audience.

2. Solve your customer's most irritating problems.

Most customers don't buy products, but they do buy solutions to problems that plague them. If your product solves a critical problem, pull out all stops to let your customers know.

3. Help your customers achieve significant goals.

This is the complement of the prior point. If you can clearly show that your product or service will make your customers' lives easier or better, your sales volume should shoot straight up.

4. Focus on your customers' needs, not your product.

Customers have limited interest in your product or company. But they have unlimited interest in their needs, solutions to their problems, and making their lives better. Concentrate on fulfilling their needs through the use of your product or service.

“Boosting The Pulling Power Of Your Direct Mail”

5. Always stress benefits.

At first, I was going to leave this point out. It seemed too basic and obvious. But judging from the mailings that have crossed my desk in the past few months, this fundamental rule has not yet sunk in.

Always concentrate on how your product will benefit your customers – both logically and emotionally. Hit the right hot buttons and your sales will skyrocket.

6. Repeat your key benefits in the beginning, middle, and end of your letter or brochure.

Tell your readers once, tell them again, and then tell them one more time. Remember, people buy benefits, not products.

7. Use the “4 to 1” rule.

Your sales copy should contain four “you's” to every one “I.” Customers want to hear about their number one priority -themselves. One of the best ways to convey that you understand your customers' needs is to use plenty of “you” language.

8. Use a stop-them-in-their-tracks headline or first sentence.

Some letters benefit from a headline while others don't. Either the headline or first sentence must be very powerful in order to convince your prospects that your letter is worth reading. One of the most effective ways to accomplish this is to hit them between the eyes with your most valuable benefit.

9. Use sub-headings liberally.

Subheads help break up long blocks of copy. They also act as a “hot point” outline to pull the reader through the key ideas of your letter or ad. Many browsers can be convinced to read your entire letter or brochure by clear, impactful subheads that feature strong benefits.

10. Seize the reader's attention immediately.

Don't waste space building up to your blockbuster points. Start with them. You have only a paragraph or two to convince your prospects to keep reading your letter. Give them what they need to make sure they continue.

“Boosting The Pulling Power Of Your Direct Mail”

11. Flatter your reader.

These days, people are much more sophisticated when it comes to advertising. They know that you got their name from a mailing list. You can turn this fact to your advantage by using this kind of copy: “If the list I got your name from is any indication, you're someone who really knows computers (or cooking, cats, fine wine, penny stocks, etc).”

12. Share some “inside” information.

Direct mail offers a perfect opportunity to appeal to a person's need to feel special. An ideal way to do this is to share some exclusive information. If you have a house mailing list, offer a special price or introductory offer to your regular customers. Make it clear that this offer is being made only to them. Special “insider” treatment is often rewarded with an order.

13. Issue a personal letter from the President.

People like to deal with the person in charge. Using this type of personal message builds confidence. A message from the President of the company can be used to great effect in either your main letter or as a lift letter.

14. Never end a sentence at the bottom of a page in a sales letter.

Always use a broken sentence to carry your reader forward onto the next page of your letter.

15. Feature the offer.

Everyone loves a good deal. Your job is to design an irresistible offer and make it a key focal point of your letter. A strong offer can often be the extra incentive that will convert your “maybes” to real live orders.

16. Give something away for FREE.

Free samples, trials, demonstrations, consultations, or information are all exceptional ways of getting customers to give your product or service a hands-on try. And a hands-on try is often all it takes to close the sale.

17. Run a contest.

Give away a free enrollment in your seminar, a free subscription to your newsletter, or anything else that appeals to your buyers- Then, hold a random drawing for all customers who respond to your offer.

“Boosting The Pulling Power Of Your Direct Mail”

18. Use a special “before the price increases” offer.

If you plan to raise your prices, make your regular customers a special offer at the old price for a limited time. A last chance offer can be a powerful motivator.

19. Repeat your offer.

An irresistible offer can overcome customer reluctance. State it at least twice in your letter, and again on your order form.

20. Make a time-limited offer.

Offer a special deal for a limited period of time. And do just that legally you can't continue a time-limited offer indefinitely.

21. Base your offer on a limited supply.

A close-out of your inventory can create strong demand. A limited supply offer can be used to designate exclusivity and prestige.

22. Offer a special deal to the first 100 people who order.

Or the first 25, 50, 250 and so on. But remember, the key here is to keep it to a meaningful limit as an incentive for customers to act quickly.

23. Make a charter offer.

This approach is ideal for new products, subscriptions, and service agreements. If your product isn't new, consider starting a club and offering charter members special benefits.

24. Make a “last chance” offer.

Last chance at this price, inventory close-outs, and last chance before a model change can all be used to successfully win more orders.

25. “Buy 1 get 1 FREE” always outpulls “2 for the price of 1.”

Although the savings are precisely the same, the first format sounds like the customer is getting a better bargain.

26. When using figures, make them as specific as possible.

“27% of all children don't get enough calcium” sounds more believable than “most children aren't getting enough calcium.” Believability and credibility are factors that help your prospects accept and buy your product.

“Boosting The Pulling Power Of Your Direct Mail”

27. Use a negative fact to make your claims more believable.

Although it's important to demonstrate the key benefits of your product, a negative element can help establish credibility.

Here's how this clever technique works. Let's say you're selling quality cashmere sweaters at bargain prices. Many customers might doubt your ability to deliver.

But if you emphasize that these sweaters are limited to only three colors – gray, beige, and white – neutral colors that have a lot of appeal, you've used a negative fact to give reasonable proof of why you can offer such a fine deal.

28. Provide your customers with testimonials from other customers just like them.

Overcome customer reluctance by demonstrating how well your product has worked for other customers with similar problems. When using testimonials, a complete name and company name (if applicable), along with the city is most convincing.

29. Always offer a guarantee.

By this I mean a STRONG guarantee. Something that shows your prospects you have complete faith in your product. A good guarantee period is at least 90 days. And a one-year guarantee is a true winner.

30. Always issue a call to action.

Tell your readers clearly and precisely what you want them to do. Don't be timid. Tell them more than once. If you don't, you run the risk of them not doing anything.

31. Give your prospects an incentive to take action NOW.

Offer discounts, free merchandise, time limits, or ironclad guarantees to help ease your prospects over whatever makes them feel reluctant.

32. Always end your letter with a P.S.

The P.S. is one of the most frequently read portions of a letter – even when other sections are skipped. Take advantage of this by driving home an impressive benefit, sweetening your offer, or otherwise motivating your prospect to act now.

“Boosting The Pulling Power Of Your Direct Mail”

33. Check the flow of your letter.

Your letter should flow smoothly from section to section. Lose your course and you might lose your reader. Also, if you use teaser copy on your envelope, make sure your headline or first sentence pick up where the teaser left off.

34. Use an 800 number.

800 numbers increase response from 10%-50%. If you can't afford your own 800 number, many companies now offer 800 number services for a fee. To find out about them, look through the ads in any direct marketing magazine – such as Direct Marketing, DM News, or Target. Marketing. 800 number providers also advertise in USA Today and the Wall Street Journal.

35. Key every ad or mailing you use – without fail.

The beauty of direct marketing is that everything is measurable. You can easily tell precisely how many inquiries and orders are generated by each of your offerings.

All you need to do is build a unique key (such as a suite number or department number) into the order form for each of your offerings. This allows you to conduct valuable market research about which ads and markets produce the most profits.

36. Repeat your offer and your guarantee on your order form.

Focus on your offer or strongest benefit and restate your guarantee. An official looking border around the guarantee has been shown to help response also.

37. Make sure your coupon is easy to use.

If your coupon is too crowded or difficult to use, you'll lose business. Have a friend or employee fill out your coupon. They can tell you how easy it is to use.

38. Always use a reply card or envelope.

Postage-paid Business Reply Cards or Business Reply Envelopes will boost your response. But they also boost your costs. While worth it for large ticket items, they may not be practical for smaller orders.

With smaller orders, use a reply card or envelope that requires your customer to use a stamp. If you don't give your customers a specific way to respond, many of them won't!

“Boosting The Pulling Power Of Your Direct Mail”

39. Use a teaser on your envelope.

To be effective, a good teaser must offer a strong incentive to open the envelope. If you feature a teaser like, “FREE – \$2,500 More Per Year For You!” you can be sure that a lot of people will open your envelope.

40. Use a plain white envelope.

Another method of getting a high percentage of prospects to open your letter is to use a plain white envelope. Either no return address or just an address without a company name pulls the best results. Prospects will wonder if there's a bill or other important document in the envelope, motivating them to open it.

41. Lift letters boost response.

A small note featuring a key benefit, special offer, or president's message is a cost-effective way of “lifting” your response.

42. Think follow-up.

You should constantly be thinking about related items to work into your product line for follow-up sales to your customers. Whenever you receive a new order, always send a follow-up offer 10 to 15 days later.

If you delivered the benefits you promised, follow-up sales will be easier and more cost-effective than winning new sales. Successful marketers know that the real profits come from follow-up sales.

43. Offer multiple versions of the same product.

Deluxe versions, full-featured models, basic features only models, and personalized versions are just four ways of getting extra mileage from the same basic product.

44. Use response mailing lists.

Lists of people who have responded to a mail order offer are more profitable than compiled lists. Always find out what the customer responded to. If you're using direct mail, responders to mailings are better prospects than responders to ads in magazines and newspapers.

45. Use HOTLINE lists.

If you can get a list of people who have responded to offers in the last 3 to 6 months, it's definitely worth the additional cost. Satisfied recent buyers are strong candidates to buy by mail again.

“Boosting The Pulling Power Of Your Direct Mail”

46.Cultivate duplicate names from different mailing lists.

Most marketers run a merge/purge when buying multiple mailing lists to eliminate duplicate names. What a waste of an exceptional marketing opportunity! Buyers who show up on multiple lists have a proven buying history. Treat them like gold!

47.How to find the best mailing lists.

Contact 3 or 4 mailing list brokers. Ask them to recommend 10 lists for your product or service. Then compare the results. The lists to test first are those recommended by more than one broker.

48.Use high quality paper when printing your brochures and sales letters.

I'm always amazed to see marketers spend a lot of money on high quality copy and design and then attempt to cut comers by using cheap paper. Initial impressions are crucial. Make sure your documents present the image you need to succeed.

49.Use colored stock for order forms.

Colored stock with black ink distinguishes your order form from the rest of your package. It draws attention and increases sales.

50.Use 2 colors of ink on order forms.

Two colors of ink on white stock gives you the opportunity to create an extremely professional looking order form. The difference in cost over black ink alone should only be 10%-15%.

51.Use a separate order form.

A separate order form will outpull a coupon contained within your brochure. Smart marketers always use both. If the separate order form is used, another pass-along order can be made from the coupon in your brochure.

52.Use heavy stock for your order form.

A substantial stock, such as card stock, always outpulls flimsier paper.

“Boosting The Pulling Power Of Your Direct Mail”

53.How to get the most mileage out of premiums.

A bulky premium that your customers can feel will get your envelope opened. If you're premium isn't bulky, a teaser along the lines of “Your FREE whizbanger is inside” is effective.

54.Cultivate “swipe” files.

Set up files and collect examples of great headlines, sales letters, brochures, coupons, teaser copy, and so on. Study the examples that really make you feel like taking action.

Don't use these ideas word for word, but take the general concepts and work them into your marketing. Start today!

55.Ask yourself this CRUCIAL question.

Based only on your direct mail package, would you buy your product or service? Be uncompromisingly honest. If your answer is “no,” keep making the necessary changes until you can unequivocally answer “YES.”