



How to Increase Direct-mail Responses

BY AMY FORIS

A common frustration that many companies face is lack of response from their direct-mail campaigns. In today's market, it is more important than ever to be as effective as possible with your marketing dollars. Every business wants the highest response rate possible. Thankfully, there are a few things that you can do to boost your direct-mail response rate.

Tip No. 1—Repetition, repetition, repetition. You need to keep your name and your call to action (offer) in front of potential customers on a monthly basis—at the very least. Do not be offended or disappointed if your phone is not ringing off the hook the first time you send a mailing. They may not have an immediate need for your product and service. But just as kids will wear you down when they really want something, you too can do the same thing with your prospects.

In Seth Godin's book *Permission Marketing*, he uses an analogy of seeds and water to demonstrate the importance of frequency in your promotional campaigns. If you were given 100 seeds with enough water to soak each seed once, would you plant all 100 seeds and water each one once, or would you be more successful planting 25 seeds and using all of the water on those 25 seeds?

To save valuable time, find a company that uses an automated direct-marketing system. Design a plan to target new prospects and reach your current customers, and then set it on autopilot.

Tip No. 2—Use a postcard. When using a postcard, you decrease the steps that your customer has to perform to see your message, and there is an immediate impact. If your prospect can tell from an envelope that it is a sales pitch, they may throw it away making an incorrect assumption of what is inside. This could attribute to losing sales. In addition, sending something in the mail gives your marketing message shelf life that radio and TV ads cannot offer.

Tip No. 3—Make your piece personal. It is a proven fact that when variable data is used, direct-mail response rates dramatically increase. For example, consider adding the recipient's name, or the exact name and address of one of your

satisfied clients to your mailer. Audiences simply respond better when addressed by name. By using variable data, your prospects and customers feel more valued when they believe your advertising and marketing is customized just for them.

Tip No. 4—Target with precision. If you just completed a job, you need to get the word out to all of their neighbors. This is called a jobsite radius mailing, which basically sends a mailer in a perfect circle around your current client. With this option, there is no need to buy a huge mailing list.

Tip No. 5—Customers and prospects will do things that eliminate their pain and gain pleasure. Painting a descriptive picture that suggests what not buying your product or services would look like is an effective marketing strategy.

For example, you could send a mailer that shows a family shivering inside their house wearing blankets, jackets and mittens with a cold, snowy scene just outside their window on one side of the card to represent a family who did not have their heating system inspected by your company; versus the other side, which shows another family sitting comfortably inside who did utilize your company's services. Of course, your company's contact information would be featured on the side of the card showing the more ideal situation. An image like this simplifies what you are trying to sell.

Your mailer should be bold with your call to action clearly and legibly stated, explaining what your customer should do and how to do it.

Bottom line, increasing your response rate is fundamentally an easy thing to do. But it is up to you to implement a strategic direct-mail campaign that provides a successful return on investment. ☺

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