

Using Direct Mail

I'm not sure if you've noticed but the first five steps in our *12 Steps to Marketing Your Small Business* program haven't had you printing anything and, well, I do own a printing business so indulge me while we review the benefits of good old fashioned ink on paper.

Direct mail is still one of the most important mediums to attract new business and that has a lot to do with building trust.

A recent survey conducted by Market Research and intelligence (MRI) looked at how people prefer to receive advertising in an attempt to understand how best to reach potential buyers. It might come as a surprise that the top two categories were "ads on paper" and "ads in mass media," each receiving 17% for a total of 34% of consumers polled. By comparison, only 9% preferred to receive advertising through non-traditional means like cellphones, social media and product placement in movies.

I believe the explanation is simple: promotional materials on paper can be examined at leisure and discarded easily without confrontation if the material is not applicable. A direct mail piece doesn't ring or buzz during meals, while newspapers, magazines and TV don't infect your computer with viruses and ask you to put in your credit card number. Customers are free to do their own research and have higher certainty that a company is legitimate if they are using stamps and addressing their marketing materials to a specific individual.

Some other benefits of direct mail include easily tracking responses with the call to action contained within the promo piece; the target audience intentionally excludes people we don't want to market too; and direct mail demonstrates stability and builds a sense of trust when compared to other less expensive media like e-mail and unaddressed admail.

Another interesting revelation in the study referenced above is that people who feel brand name is an indication of quality heavily prefer ads on paper.

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So what are some of the important elements in a direct mail campaign? First, the piece should be personalized and customized to the recipient. This doesn't mean "Dear John, I'd like to offer you the same thing I'm offering everybody else," it means the piece should appeal to John's buying



patterns according to the information we have about John. If John is married with small children, a vacation package on backpacking the Himalaya Mountains may not be as appealing as a four-star resort and spa. Second, direct mail has to be timely and relevant. If I've bought a new car in the last 12 months, a direct mail piece selling me home and auto insurance is more likely to catch my attention than a piece selling me a new car. Third, the direct mail offer has to have a compelling call to action. The next steps for the buyer must be clearly defined, easy to follow and execute. Our experience has been that mail pieces have a higher response rate when the call to action is a telephone call versus

an online response.

Tips to cut your costs

While direct mail is highly trusted, it is still relatively expensive on a per unit basis because postage is running you \$0.38 to \$0.57 per unit, usually far more than the print costs of the actual piece. So what can you do to lower the cost? Consider the *need* for an envelope: will a self-addressed postcard be sufficient for your purposes? If so, you can eliminate expense and waste, there is no stuffing required, and even at the largest size Canada Post will allow as regular mail 9 x 6, you can get four from a sheet versus only two folded invitations that measure 10 x 7. Fewer sheets, fewer dollars!

If you need an envelope, can the piece be self-addressed and fit into a window envelope? If you need to address the envelope, it has to be matched to the

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personalized insert essentially creating two more steps in the process. More steps, more dollars!

Addressed Admail

From canadapost.ca:

Addressed Admail is a proven and effective direct marketing medium that offers Customers the ability to personalize their mailing and target their promotional messages to specific consumers or prospects.

To qualify as Addressed Admail, mailings must:

- * meet the Addressed Admail definition (see section 2.1.1 for details)
- * consist of a minimum of 1,000 items
- * be properly prepared and/or presorted in accordance with the Mail Preparation and Presortation Guides. Visit canadapost.ca/mailpreparation for more information
- * be deposited and paid for in Canada for delivery in Canada.

NOTE:

canadapost.ca/aasupportdocuments has a list of support documents detailing the Addressed Admail service requirements.

Another good tip is to marry some of the names from the prospect list with your own customer data to make sure you get over 1000 units to qualify for Addressed Admail rates. Using a qualified mail provider to perform a letter carrier presort or setting the piece up as machineable, means saving up to \$ 0.19 per unit on postage.

In summary, direct mail isn't cheap, it is effective. Done properly you can use it to build trust, create leads, and reinforce your business brand. It is also important to remember that direct mail alone is never enough, you must touch the customer 3-10 times before your business gets sticky.

Kwik Kopy Halifax has produced innumerable direct mail campaigns for its clients. It's time your company gave it a try. The results speak for themselves.

*Contact us today to set up an appointment to discuss your next direct mail campaign. Call **453-5151** or e-mail us at info@kkhalifax.com.*