

PLANNING YOUR DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGN



A well-design, well-crafted message delivered via custom postcard can be a vital, profitable tool in your marketing arsenal. Consider:

- A postcard is tangible – customers and prospects can hold it, share it, keep it for future action.
- A postcard is credible – “This is from that business I drive by every day. It’s a real offer from a real company.”
- A postcard builds your brand – the logo on the card matches the one on local ads and on the side of your building.
- A postcard is direct and personal – this came to me!

SUCCESSFUL MARKETING TAKES PLANNING AND FORESIGHT

Before you can sit down and write effective sales copy and design a high-impact mailing piece you have to set goals. You have to know what you expect to accomplish. “I want to sell more,” isn’t enough. Below are a few goals that a targeted postcard campaign should achieve:

1. Keep in touch with active existing customers, building upon your relationship to do more business.
2. Keep in touch with inactive customers – customer’s you’ve worked with, but not for a long time.
3. Make them aware of what’s new, what’s hot and what’s waiting for them. Stir into action long-term prospects – potential buyers who’ve shown interest but never closed the deal.
4. Promote traditionally slow days of the week, months, etc. to generate more traffic.
5. Educate customers and prospects – announce new locations, special events, the addition of new brands, etc.
6. Invite customers and prospects to special events.



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7. Encourage customers and prospects to visit your website for updates, specials and deals.
8. Promote the latest mobile app.
9. Thank customers for their business
10. Remind customers of appointments, regular events, etc.
11. Introduce new staff.

Setting an appropriate goal and then working backward to build your marketing tool will keep the process in line.

LOOK INTO THE FUTURE TO SCHEDULE YOUR CAMPAIGN

A knee-jerk reaction to market activity is a poor response that seldom pays. Getting the most from any marketing program requires advance planning. Every successful campaign has an assortment of moving parts, each taking time to complete:

- It takes time to develop your key sales points
- Time to put them into crisp copy
- Time to create a smashing layout and design
- It takes a lot of time to generate a top-notch mailing list of prime targets.
- And, when it's all sorted, created and ready to go, it takes time to go from your shop to a prospect's mailbox – and you have to give them time to respond.



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Sit down and pick target dates for your upcoming promotions. Begin the planning process ASAP to avoid making rushed decisions – which often cost you time and money while leading to additional mistakes. You'll be surprised at how long it actually takes. To get started, consider these elements of a successful postcard campaign:

- Getting everyone to agree on the basic concept, target or goal
- Deciding upon the right offer to present
- The time required to write, edit, proofread solid sales copy
- The effort required to obtain appropriate art work – take photos, create illustrations, etc.
- The time it takes to get upper management to approve each step
- The lead time required to obtain the appropriate mailing list – from a rental source or created inhouse
- Time it takes to pull all the elements together, make final corrections/changes and prepare the piece for the printer
- How long between the time it is delivered to the printer until finished pieces are ready to mail
- How long to complete the mailing – will it be done at the printer's, sent to an outside specialty mail house, brought back to you to mail, etc.
- How long will it take for the postcards to go from the post office to your targets' homes

This complete process takes weeks. And there's another wrinkle – for best results you need to make the offer more than once. Repeated delivery of your sales messages boost response. You need to factor in how many versions will be created and how often to repeat the process – the approvals and creative will go fast when it's the same concept. Production and mailing time should not vary.



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**** TIP FROM A PRO —** It is wise to give your targets appropriate time to respond relative to your sales process. They often need to plan, too. A rule of thumb is to allow them at least two weeks of lead time.

Once you've go through all the items you'll need to factor into the process, here are suggested steps for the process:

1. Define your target market and determine mailing size and budgets
2. Order your mailing list – from a list broker or from a database within your organization
3. Put copywriter and designer together to begin the creative process – art work can be developed while copy is written
4. Align all the necessary people who must comment and approve the final piece and brief them on all appropriate details
5. Get final approval on every item – make edits, changes, etc.
6. Confirm when and where the mailing labels will be applied
7. Have mailing lists scanned and reviewed
8. Send creative and mailing lists to the printer
9. Arrange for appropriate postage payments
10. Drop at appropriate Post Office

When you select a postcard supplier – printer, mail house – make sure you are clear on what your final deadline must be. A professional can help you work back from that date and provide insights into how best to proceed on each step.



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HOW MANY IS 'ENOUGH' — HOW MANY PIECES TO MAIL

One of the first decisions, and perhaps the most difficult, is deciding how many postcards to mail. Determining that right number has a great impact on the overall budget. How many responses can you truly handle? What will your offer be? What will your offer cost in the short-term?

There is no formula to plug in the number of postcards you must send to get the response you want. Too many variables to be considered. Your budget will determine how many postcards you can send and how often you can send them. Obviously, it's a numbers game and the more people you make your offer to, the more people with an opportunity to respond.

HOW OFTEN CAN BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN HOW MANY

Repetition is the key to success with direct mail. Repetition is the key to success with direct mail.

Regular, repeat mailings will get your message not only seen, but understood and responded to. When you create a true campaign with a regular schedule of mailings you can develop predictable responses. A company presenting offers to customers and prospects every quarter will get more response than a company offering a special once a year.

A campaign, by definition, is a series of activities designed to reach a predetermined goal. One postcard mailing may work...two would be better and three means even more results.

**** TIP FROM A PRO —** Savvy marketers know you have to repeat the message. Working your mailing list monthly, quarterly, etc. — enhances the chances of positive response. With each mailing, undeliverable addresses are removed and new prospects added. Repeat exposure makes it more likely you'll hit prospects when the timing is right. Why do you see the same TV commercial over and over again? Marketers want you to remember them when you're ready to buy.



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A postcard campaign can be simply mailing the same card over and over again. Or, it can be a series of cards building on the promotion and adding interest or a sense of urgency. A sports car with a fuel level sensor provides a computer generated voice that reports “fuel level is low.” Later it repeats, etc. Wouldn’t it get a quicker response if “fuel level is low” was followed by “fuel is almost gone,” followed by “you’re running out of gas!” Fear of missing out on a special deal is a real motivator for many consumers.

Very successful campaigns rely on two key elements:

- A series of postcards that repeats and reinforces the message with different levels of urgency but with unifying themes
- An always up-dated mailing list – any undeliverable names, or people who have responded are removed from second and third mailings and replaced with new prospects

FOLLOW UP EVERY LEAD FAST

The only true measure of a campaign’s success is converting response to sales. The only way to monitor the conversion is to follow up on every lead as quickly as possible. How many leads come in? How many result in closed deals? Do you know where your leads are coming from? Are you sure? A postcard delivered six months ago could result in new business tomorrow – buyers act when they are ready.

To track the impact of your postcard mailings you need to know how many people responded and how much they spent based on that response. It’s easiest to keep these numbers on a spreadsheet for regular review as your plan additional mailings.

It’s at this point the entire staff becomes a vital monitoring tool. Every salesperson, every customer service rep and anyone who takes inquiries on the phone needs to be well-schooled in how to ask how a customer or prospect heard of the business, heard of the offer and decided to respond. Customers may or may not mention the postcard when they ask about the offer – did they hear about it from a friend, a family member or get the card addressed to them? These are critical questions to answer.

