



Mitre Publications Guide to Direct Mail

'Marketing is not an event, but a process . . . It has a beginning, a middle, but never an end, for it is a process. You improve it, perfect it, change it, even pause it. But you never stop it completely.'

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What is Direct Marketing?

Direct Marketing is the planned recording, analysis and tracking of individual customers' responses and transactions for the purpose of developing and prolonging mutually profitable customer relationships".

In short, direct marketing is **driven by data**, involving a one-to-one relationship between individual and marketing organisation that can be controlled by either party at each stage of a campaign.

Above all, direct marketing is **measurable**. Whether you're using emails, mail, phone calls or mobile phone text messages, you can monitor exactly what is sent, when it is sent and the response rates that result.

Joined up marketing...

Direct mail should be a part of your overall marketing communications programme. If you leverage or can tie it into a programme of communication then you will get higher responses. For example by doing a combination of a press article, eNewsletter, or mailer; they can reinforce each other. Thereby creating lots of 'opportunities to see' amongst your customers and prospects.

If you are persistent about getting your message out to the right people you'll soon see results. Direct mail is an incredibly effective way to communicate with potential customers.

What is targeting?

The process of identifying audiences, markets, specific sections or clusters and also individuals that match known characteristics (especially propensity to buy); and using this information in the design and content of marketing campaigns that reach and appeal to these certain classes or types of customers

Why is it important?

- Means you are talking to groups of people that need / want your services.
- Reduce wasted resources

If you are buying mailing list, here are some questions to ask:

- What is the origin of database?
- Quality of list: How often is it mailed / updated
- Goneaways, what if undeliverables are above industry norm of 5%, is a rebate negotiable.
- Minimum quantity, usage rights (once, multiple or outright), any other restrictions?
- Criteria: named, position, no. of employees, turnover, registered vs trading addresses, geographical targeting.
- Is MPS and TPS suppressed?
- Results and references - are response rates available?
- Costs, what is included; is there an output charge?

Planning

Start with the outcome - what do you want to achieve / what is your objective? And then work backwards. A plan is vital as it forces you to define your intentions and answers the **when / where / what questions** in one document.

Remember once is not enough

Your mailing needs to go out frequently, not just once. The average person may not be ready to commit to your service the first time you send out a mailing, but that does not mean they don't need what you are offering. Think about their buying cycle, is it daily, monthly or yearly. Statistics show that the average person needs to make contact with you anywhere from 6 - 12 times before they'll make a purchase.

Writing a sales letter

Think in terms "you" not "we" when writing

The person you're writing to doesn't care about you, your business or what you do. So talk to them in their terms, using the word "you" a lot. Think about the benefits of what you do rather than the features of the product or service. Try to write in a 'language' that they will understand, a plumber will require a different style and tone to an investment banker.

Keep it simple and easy to read

Focus on a key message that is benefit-led then support this with 'evidence', have a powerful header that draws them in. Keep the layout uncluttered and paragraphs short. Avoid overuse of italics, bolding and different fonts. Use bullet points and indenting judiciously.

Include an incentive

An incentive to respond can really boost response, it need not be anything elaborate a simple £25 off for the first 100 customers can work wonders for response rates.

Use testimonials and / or case studies

Nothing is more powerful than being "recommended" by someone else in the form of a testimonial. Use real names and business names, where possible try ensure they are sector specific according to each prospect.

Make sure you include a call to action and try making it urgent

Don't assume people will know what to do after their have received your direct mail. Keep it simple and spell it out for them - "call 01327 81003 now to order your leaflet". Try and establish what their preferred way to respond is (telephone, website, email or response card).

Add some urgency to it, perhaps with a special offer that will expire on Friday. You want the busy decision maker to pick up the phone or go online and order now, not put the letter down with the intention of "doing it later"... because they'll probably not get round to it.

Also make it clear that you will be contacting them in the near future to see if you can help them; don't only rely on them to respond - they may simply forget or be swamped with other things.

Add a P.S. to your direct mail letters

A P.S. at the foot of the page is the second most read part of a direct mail letter after the headline. Use it to reiterate your sales message, it will get read.

Check and check again

Do a spell check and then get someone who can spell to check your letter. Also ask somebody objective to give feedback, what do they think you're offering. Is it clear and easy to understand? You could even do a small test mailing, send out the letter to 5 clients or prospects and ask them what they think.

Basic letter structure

A quick and easy way to write a good selling letter is to use the A.I.D.C.A. formula as your basic structure. But don't forget the letter is a personal communication. If you wouldn't say something face to face, don't write it.

Attention	<i>headline</i>
Salutation	<i>personalised or interesting</i>
Interest	<i>para 1</i>
Desire	<i>para 2</i>
Credibility	<i>para 3</i>
Action	<i>para 4</i>
Courteous close	<i>para 5</i>
P.S.	<i>if appropriate</i>

The follow up...

Make a follow-up phone call

Telephone follow up can dramatically boost response, the customer is often expecting it, even wants it, it makes it easier for him to buy. So make sure you follow up your letters if you want the biggest return on investment. If you hate cold calling, then pay a temp to do it, or hire a telesales company. Be careful not to call people or companies registered with the Telephone Preference Service, as that's illegal.

Don't do the hard sell when you follow-up. Aim for a dialogue; perhaps start out by asking for their feedback on the contents of your mailer. If they say they have not read it yet, don't fall into the trap of saying that you will resend it. Walk them through the content and make sure that you use descriptive words and phrases

Telemarketing scripts

No matter how experienced you may be with telemarketing it is always useful to have a script, not necessarily the kind you read like a robot, but at least a list of points you want to cover in the call,

it will keep you on track and in control. You are making those calls to sell not make friends a script will keep the calls brisk and business like.

Find a way to track responses

You need to know how your direct mail campaign did. So find a simple way to track it. This can be a code that people must quote to get a certain offer, or better still, an offer in your letter that's not repeated anywhere else. Tracking in this way will help you test different types of campaigns to find those that work the best. Use a simple spreadsheet to work out your return rate.

Repeat the best performing campaigns and cut the poor performers. Over time you will build up a good understanding of what works for your product or service and will be able to improve your overall return on investment (ROI).

Good luck and if you need help with letter writing, database development, fulfilment, or telesales call Mitre Publications on 01908 630 300. We can help you grow your business using direct marketing.

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