

18 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS That Can Make or Break Your Direct Marketing Campaign

1. **A terrific product or service is absolutely essential. Otherwise, people won't return to buy from you again.**

An important direct marketing concept: the back end is more important than the front end. In other words, getting your customers to buy from you again is most important and you won't get them back unless you have a terrific product or service.

If your product or service can stand on its own without a lot of hype, you will get repeat customers.

2. **The lists you choose can make or break your mailing.**

How can you possibly create a successful mailing without knowing who you are mailing to?!? You must know their thoughts, dreams, and goals. Know their demographics (how they are) and psychographics (how they would like to be). And when you write copy to them, write to them expressing the way they would *like to be, not how they really are.*

Most people want more out of life than work and their paycheck. Promise them *more* in your direct mail piece.

In addition, choose lists that can grow with you. Select vital lists that can return repeaters to you and you will do so much better in your marketing.

3. **The offer you use can dramatically increase your results.**

Too many of us use the same offer over and over again. Good offers to good lists are two key elements to the success of a mailing package.

Test your new offer even with the lists you've been using all along and your results *should* go up.

4. **In creative work, copywriting skills are vital. Art attracts but COPY SELLS.**

Concentrate on the correct copy for the appropriate audience. Proselytize them with the appropriate offer and then you've got a good, strong package.

Your wording must appeal to the reader by informing, persuading, cajoling, convincing and motivating the reader.

There are only three types of people to whom you mail. They are:

1. Those who *will* buy from you.
2. Those who *won't* buy from you.
3. Those who *might*, but they need a little push in your direction.

If you get argumentative in your copy, you turn off all those who *will* buy from you. Concentrate on the in-between group with your copy. Inform, persuade, motivate and inspire them.

5. **Good design should lead the eye. It should not dominate the display.**

The design does not sell -- even if you're selling Caribbean vacations. Art attracts, explains and enhances, and *good* art will let the copy make the sale.

Write the copy first. Design once you know how long the copy is, when you know the key copy points, and once you know to whom it is going. Design *follows* copy, and then design gets the reader hooked and *leads* the reader to respond by using the response form.

In all instances, do not have your art display dominate your mailing package. You want the reader to understand everything the first time it is read. If the reader has to read it twice you lost him!

6. **Format selection influences the reader's attention.**

A self-mailer (one not mailed in an envelope) allows for fast decisions. Your prospect may feel a self mailer is a bulletin, an announcement or an annoyance: "Let me glance at this and throw it away." The reader doesn't pick it up with the idea of reading every word but rather "do I want to get rid of this?" The reader has 17+ pieces of direct mail on his desk each day and he needs to get rid of them. So ...

Produce your self mailer with a powerful headline and design it in a way that traps the reader. Then, the reader thinks: "Oh, I can make a fast decision."

A mailer in an envelope is more complicated. The reader may think: "there's a lot of stuff in that envelope and I don't know if I have time for it." So it may be set aside. Then it gets piled on and the mailing package may never be seen. An envelope mailer is okay, but not when it says to someone, "It's going to take two hours to read this thing!" That's how you lose readers.

7. **Proper timing is essential.**

You need to reach prospects at a time that is convenient for them. Mail to people at a time when they're not grossly involved - like their busy season - and when they've got the time to read your message.

8. Budget restrictions can severely hamper results.

Saving a few pennies per thousand may mean you create the wrong impression on your audience. What you want to do is test with the most powerful presentation possible. If the test is successful, then the second time you mail, modify the expense on the new package (B) and test against the more expensive one (A). This will help you see if B, at the reduced cost, pulls as well as A, at the higher cost.

9. You must take advantage of A/B split testing.

Never, ever mass mail without doing some split testing. The point is to get information back that you can use in the next mailing.

10. Segmented marketing can achieve very high responses for you.

Select a segment of names from a database and mail them a given proposition. When you are selling the same product to different groups (clusters) it is important to use a different approach, touting different benefits. Remember to treat each cluster individually.

11. Tailor your mail to an individual prospect.

Tailored mail PULLS BEST because it talks to the reader as an individual. When tailoring mail, you must change more than a couple of headlines. The first few paragraphs of the letter could be different to suit a specific reader's interest.

In addition, tailoring means the order form will be composed with different benefits on it. The outgoing envelope or headline portion of a self-mailer will also speak right to the reader's interests.

When you tailor your mail to the specific interests of the reader, you will pull far better.

12. Personalization pays.

This includes personalized reply cards and letters which will ALWAYS out-pull non-personalized mailings. But, you have to be sure to use personalization in a natural way. Don't personalize so that every paragraph has a personal message. It's a turn off and makes people think you're scamming them.

If you are personalizing, you must take very special care to talk with your computer programmers and inform them that you are personalizing the mail. Otherwise, mistakes are made.

13. Options put your prospects in a power position.

If you don't offer the reader options, you don't pull as well as if you do offer options. Once you get the reader to pick up a pen to choose an option, you've got him.

The more options you put in, the more you pre-qualify the recipient.

14. Urgency lifts your total response.

If the reader sets aside your mail piece for later, it will not be read again. Give a deadline to force the reader to read it and make the deadline as specific as possible.

For contests, sweepstakes, lotteries, or prize drawings in which the prospect must *qualify*, use the time of day, along with the day and date. The more specific the deadline, the better the pull.

15. Risk relievers, such as guarantees or warranties, build confidence.

Your prospects are tired of a rip-off society. Guarantees and warranties need to be highly specific and point out why it is appropriate for the reader to deal with you.

Double guarantees out-pull single guarantees. So, try this Gnamism:

If one works, try two. If two work, try more. It may increase your response dramatically.

16. Use reinforcers, such as testimonials and case histories, which state your product or service is really the best.

If someone else says you're great, that's better than you saying you're great.

17. Benefits are better than features and are more important than features.

People buy benefits. They don't buy features. They use the features to rationalize the benefits. And there must be more than one benefit.

A smart marketer sets his/her product apart from all others by promoting benefits.

18. The response command.

Telling someone to do something works better than assuming the prospect knows what to do. For example, the outside of an envelope should say "Open Now" or "Look Inside." Once inside, tell them to fill out the order form and fax it back. Here's where you need to push a little.