



A Direct Hit: 5 Steps to Doing Direct Mail Right

Your email inbox may be bursting, but your actual mailbox is probably a lot emptier than it used to be. That's a huge marketing opportunity for businesses, says Elizabeth Terchunian, associate category merchant at Staples.

“With the move to digital marketing, customers are constantly bombarded with emails and online advertising. This makes direct mail a great way to really make your campaign stand out and increase awareness in a select area,” she says.

But marketers can't just put themselves in a mailbox and expect to get traction – launching a successful direct mail campaign takes some thought. Here are five steps to creating a strong campaign.

1. SET A CLEAR GOAL.

Decide what you want to achieve and commit to that goal. Want to increase sales 10 percent over a certain period? Want to see 20 percent more traffic at a specific store? Those clear goals can help you decide which products to highlight, what promotion to offer or what selling point you'd like to emphasize, as well as the locations and demographics your mail should reach. The more concrete your goal is, the more likely you are to find a way to achieve it.

2. TARGET THE RIGHT MAILBOXES.

Think about the areas and customer characteristics you want to target. Do you want businesses or residential addresses? What level of household income? Families with or without kids? Your print services provider should be able to help you reach these mailboxes. For example, Terchunian notes that Staples has an online tool that allows customers to see carrier routes in their area, as well as a heat map that shows where their preferred customer characteristics are most common. The tool lets them know their options and how to make the best selections.

Once you select the area, you pick the quantity of people you want to receive a piece, she says. The number will vary based on the area you're targeting and how narrow your criteria are. But in many cases, pricing structures make it more cost-effective to send out large quantities — Staples often recommends 5,000 per mailing. “You want to be careful not to limit yourself to too small of a batch,” Terchunian notes.



Continued from page 1

3. MAKE DESIGN AND CONTENT A PRIORITY.

When it comes to your message in a direct mail piece, “Be clear and engaging – and don’t try to send too much information all at once,” Terchunian advises. Communicate your most important points simply and cleanly. Usually, your message will prompt the recipient to visit your website or storefront for further action, so the customers should know exactly where to go and what to do.

You don’t want recipients to think your direct mail is junk mail, so quality materials are also essential. A solid paper weight and an appealing look can establish your legitimacy, and it might make the difference between getting saved for later versus going straight to the trash bin.

4. FOLLOW UP.

A single mail piece may be enough to achieve your goals, but follow-up campaigns can maximize results for some marketers, Terchunian says. If your business is trying to increase its exposure to a new market, for example, several messages in a year may be needed to build familiarity. Direct mail also works well to communicate a change in operations, such as a new location or extended hours.

Follow-up mail pieces should be visually similar to previous campaign designs to help build your brand identity. Also, make sure you’re adjusting your target areas based on information gleaned from previous campaigns.

5. TRACK YOUR SUCCESS.

Just like with email, it’s critical to know how your precious direct mail dollars performed. Invite customers to use a special promotion code or drive them to a digital landing page so you can track conversion. Record the data and analyze it compared with your overall mailing area. That way, you’ll know how your direct mail performed and you can restructure your targeting accordingly.

To find out how Staples can help you improve your direct mail strategy, visit us online at StaplesAdvantage.com/print or give us a call at **1-844-243-8645**.