

DIRECT MAIL PLANNER

1. Create the mailing list/s & quantify numbers: let's develop several lists to ensure we are contacting everybody we should.
2. Create the 'mailing piece'. Our piece needs to be impactful, in line with our brand and mailable but with a strong offer that will spur the recipient into action. The purpose is not so much to inform (website has all that) but rather to create an action.

Apparently, according to most direct-mail gurus:

- 40 percent of a piece's impact comes from sending it to the right list in the first place.
- 40 percent comes from the value of the offer.
- 20 percent comes from the design or writing of the piece.

3. Code the response vehicle. However we ask recipients to respond we should code the mailing by giving it a number such as 0519 to show the month/year of the mailing and if we vary the offer we can add another number to show that. This way we can determine what's working best.
4. Test the campaign. Depending on our likely numbers, we could begin by sending out a test mailing (say 10%) to see what response rate is like. However, this may not be worth it if numbers quite small.
Figures I've found on response rates suggest that if your rate is less than two percent, something needs changed, probably the offer. If you get a response rate above seven percent for a mass mailing (without giving away the farm), you've done very, very well.
5. Run the campaign. Keep your mailing pace in line with your ability to handle the potential responses. Your test mailing will give you some sense of the rate of customer response. Use that as a gauge for how many pieces you should mail in a given week. Mail only those pieces you can support with your sales effort.
6. Handle customer responses. You can't handle the fulfilment end of a direct-mail campaign without considerable planning. If you're asking respondents to request additional information, what are you going to send them? How soon do you want to mail the information out? What else will you do with the responses?

If you're a company with distributors or sales offices, it's common to pass along the names of prospects, so that follow-up can be handled on the local level. This can be handled with e-mail or faxes. The quicker the response the better, since your speed in dispatching information can quite justifiably be viewed as reflective of your commitment to customer service. Why should respondents have to wait for materials?

7. Analyse the results of the campaign. This is perhaps the most important, and underrated, aspect of the campaign. Did the final results match what you expected from the test? What parts of the demographic responded better than expected? Are there subsets of your target audience that you can focus on in future mailings? Every direct-mail campaign you run should contribute not just to your sales figures but to enhancing your customer database. In very real terms, it represents the future of your business.