

Direct Mail

Direct mail continues to be the most targeted and effective way to incite customers or prospects to act. The U.S. Postal Service reports that mid- to large-size companies allocate an average of 22 percent of their marketing budget to direct mail. Why? Because it works.

Why Use Direct Mail?

1. *Control*

You maintain complete control over the presentation of your message and offer. You can mail to anyone, at any time, using any offer—in a variety of formats.

2. *Easily Targetable*

By focusing on a select audience with the characteristics most likely to make them receptive to your offer, you can target your marketing dollars most effectively. You avoid the cost of marketing to prospects that are not qualified, and have little potential to buy. Target consumers by location, age, income, credit scores, ethnicity, or any other demographic factor. Target businesses by industry, annual revenue, location, number of employees, or any other indicator.

3. *Time Is On Your Side*

You control the exact moment your message is delivered to the audience, and define the amount of time they have to respond. This helps your customer service department, finance department, and warehouse plan for anticipated response.

4. *Accurate Evaluation*

By including a specific call-to-action and return vehicle (reply card, phone number, URL, fax number), direct mail is infinitely measurable. Response rates are clear-cut and easily-attributable, and return on investment is simple to calculate. Additionally, testing different elements of the mail package (e.g. offer, headline, mailing list) allows marketers to determine the most successful variables and roll them out to their entire prospect base, thereby ensuring a higher response rate overall.

5. *Cost-Effectiveness*

By targeting the mailing list carefully, you only pay to send your message to those consumers who will be interested in—and qualify for—what you have to offer.

Direct Mail Page 2

6. *It's Interactive*

Direct mail is a very tactile media. The recipient can hold it, open it, and read it on their time. Nobody likes an empty mailbox, and many people look at every piece of mail they receive. Direct mail guarantees that your advertisement will have the recipient's undivided attention for a short period of time.

7. *The Personal Touch*

The recipient's name can be placed on the envelope and letter salutation, giving your mailing a more personal feel.

8. *Creativity*

Direct mail offers flexibility and creativity in the presentation of your message, and in the tailoring of your offer, so consumers will get exactly the information that you want them to have.

Direct Mail Page 3

Direct Mail By The Numbers

A survey conducted by DM News shows that consumers prefer communication by mail despite increased internet use. Also, the survey shows that direct mail is preferred as a marketing medium when compared to telemarketing, internet pop-ups, and e-mail ads. Sixty-six percent (2 out of 3) of respondents preferred direct mail advertising to all other forms of advertising.

- Overall, 56.7% of the adult U.S. population placed an order by mail for a product or service.
- Over 50% of consumers receiving direct mail read the piece immediately, and 40% of those consumers found the information useful.
- Over 71% of financial institutions use direct mail as part of their marketing strategy. Financial product and service companies polled by the DMA (Direct Marketing Association) overwhelmingly choose direct mail in their campaign over other forms of direct advertising:
 1. Direct mail = 71.5%
 2. E-mail and pop-ups = 31%
 3. Telephone marketing = 21.5%
- Do-not-call lists and the Can Spam Act make it harder to reach some consumers with other direct marketing campaigns, yielding them accessible only through direct mail.
- Direct mail can offer better returns on your advertising investment than other media. Studies show that on the average, every dollar spent on direct mail advertising brings \$10 in sales. This is more than twice the response generated by direct television ads.
- Direct mail marketers often cite the 60-30-10 rule. This means that 60% of a direct-mail package's success depends on the mailing list, 30% on the offer, and 10% on the creativity.
- Make sure your mailing list is current. Studies have shown that lists 12–18 months old may contain 30% or more inaccurate information.
- In a recent poll, the Direct Marketing Association reported that of 35 firms who use direct mail as part of their advertising campaign, the average revenue per contact was \$2.17, while the average cost per contact was \$0.38.

Direct Mail Page 4

Direct Mail Strategies

1. *Use The Best List Available*

To quote one direct mailing specialist, “The mailing list is 60% of your direct mailing campaign”. This means that putting some serious thought into your mailing list will improve your response rate. For each mailing, narrow the consumer pool on your mailing list as narrowly as possible to describe your “ideal customer”. You can do this by income, age, credit score, or distance from your business, presence of children, or type of automobile owned or leased. Deliverability is another issue. Your mail pieces must be sent to deliverable addresses in order to receive responses. Zodiac Printing recommends ordering all business and consumer lists from suppliers who claim 90% or higher deliverability.

2. *Design your mail piece to be noticeable among other mail pieces.*

Consumers like mail pieces that are catchy and different. In this way, envelope design is critical to getting the consumer to open your mail piece. Use window envelopes (a peek at what is inside) or graphics to grab the reader’s attention. Tease the consumer by beginning your message on the envelope and instill urgency by using key words like: NEW, WIN, FREE, SAVE, NOW.

3. *Make your mail piece personalized.*

Include a letter to the consumer using their name. Write to them on a more personal level, using friendly, personal sentences and salutations.

4. *Use color in your mailing to grab attention.*

Symbols such as *, \$, % also draw attention to important points and figures in your mailing. Bold type, italics, and underlining should be used only to draw emphasis to important points and should not be overused.

5. *Include benefits*

Include the benefits of making the purchase and what the consumer will lose out on if they do not comply. Use deadlines, such as REPLY BY., LAST CHANCE, URGENT, etc. to inspire action.

6. *Make it easy to reply to your mailing.*

Include an addressed return envelope or use a double reply postcard to make it easy for customers to respond to your offer. Make sure you ask the customer for their order in your mail piece and give them easy-to-follow directions on how to respond to your offer.

Direct Mail Page 5

Direct Mail Strategies - Continued

7. Use an inbound response vehicle.

Enclose a coupon or sale card (such as SAVE \$25 WITH THIS COUPON ON ANY PURCHASE MADE BEFORE...) in your mailing and ensure that consumers know to bring the coupon in hand to your sale. This gives the consumer a concrete guarantee that they will save money with you and allows you to see how effective your direct mail campaign is.

8. Time your direct mail piece for the customer to get it a few days before the event.

You don't want your customers to receive your offer too early and forget about your event, or too late, when it is past the event date. Depending on the distance the mail has to travel, Zodiac Printing Corp. estimates about a week for advanced notice. Also, have a piece mailed to yourself so you know when your customers receive your offer.

9. Postcards are the cheapest way to send direct mail and they mail first class.

Use available space wisely to get your message across in order to bring the cost of direct mailing down even further. Call your Zodiac sales rep for U.S. Post Office specifications for postcard size and weight.

10. Use dimensional mailers for hard-to-reach audiences.

For business-to-business direct mail, getting your package past the "gatekeeper" is often an issue. Flat envelopes and postcards are often discarded by secretaries or assistants as "junk mail" before the addressee ever sees them. One good way to get your offer to its target is to use a dimensional mailer. Anything three-dimensional, such as a box or mailing tube, is much more likely to reach its destination. Just make sure your return address is properly identified to avoid making the package looking suspicious.

11. Direct mail is also a great retention tool.

Finally, in addition to using direct mail to earn new business, direct mail can be used to secure business that you already have. Direct mail is one of the ways you can notify current and past customers that you care about them and it's also a good way to collect additional consumer data.



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Direct Mail Page 6

Conclusion

Direct mail is usually the best marketing tool at your disposal. Whether used for a direct-response offer or simply to build brand awareness, no other medium offers such targeted capabilities at low prices. Zodiac Printing specializes in high-quality direct mail, and can help answer any additional questions you may have. If you're looking for a company to manage your direct mail campaign, from design to printing to list research to mail processing, there's no one with more experience. We can handle all of the project, or select portions. Call us at 800-829-7720 or go to www.zodiacink.com. We're here to make your marketing efforts the best they can be.

About Zodiac Printing

Zodiac produces and mails high quality direct advertising. Since our founding in 1980, Zodiac has helped thousands of companies reach their target audience. We look out for our clients, and as a family-owned business, we pride ourselves on long-term relationships with satisfied customers. Our mission is to do it right the first time.

Bring your project to Zodiac Printing and see how easily you can have high-quality, cost-effective, stress-free direct mail.