

Raising response rates

There are four golden rules concerning what you put in a mailshot. Follow these four rules and your direct mail is bound to get a higher response rate than ever before.

1. Consider how the recipient reads your direct mail.

Imagine the situation in which the recipient is looking at the mail - is he rushed, is she likely to be interrupted... Is it a smoky environment, a noisy office, a crowded staffroom... This insight will allow you to write a piece that grabs and holds the reader's attention. As I have often said, most people don't read your direct mail just because you send it to them. You have to grab their attention and usually this means being dramatic, bold or surreal.

2. Consider the benefits of what you are selling.

The customer is interested in himself, or herself - not in you. Don't announce that you have been in business for 20 years, that this is your summer sale, or that you've just moved into new premises. Tell the reader what your product or service will do for him or her. Consider the benefits, and think of your unique selling point - and focus entirely on this. The best messages are the ones that say, "buy this and you will get this benefit..."

3. Make the customer happy.

Don't tell the customer he/she has a problem. Don't tell the reader that life is bad. Don't focus on negatives. Instead congratulate the reader on doing very well (perhaps in difficult circumstances) and share with the reader the fact that life can be a lot better from now on.

4. Establish your credibility

Once you have the readers interest you have to make the reader believe in you.

There are many ways of doing this. One way involves giving a list of other firms or individuals who have benefited from your services or products. Another can be to stress just how many individuals or organisations have bought from you.

A different approach can be the establishment of your company name with the potential customer through regular re-advertising. If the customer has received four or five mail shots from you he or she might well begin to accept your credibility simply because of this fact. However you do it, you must ensure that you don't let your customer get away because you don't mention your credentials.

In our experience all direct mail campaigns that attend to all four rules achieve much higher response rates than campaigns that ignore one or the four golden rules.

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