

Unleash the Power of Direct Mail

If you miss seven balls out of ten, you're batting three hundred, and that's good enough for the Hall of Fame. You can't score if you keep the bat on your shoulder. – Walter B. Wriston

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Direct mail is one of the most powerful ways to market your Home Care company. Direct mail marketing refers to directly-mailed advertisements, offers, mail-orders, coupon advertising, post-card offers, even offers on a web site. It encompasses any method of marketing that attempts to make a sale right there and then to the prospective client. Direct mail doesn't always make the sale, but it can produce lists of crucial leads that result in sales.

Advantages of Direct Mail Over Other Advertising Methods Are:

1. You can more accurately measure and test results.
2. You can concentrate on a target audience.
3. You can personalize your marketing.
4. You can expect a greater overall number of responses.
5. You can enjoy repeat sales from former clients and obtain referrals.

Why Direct Mail Often Fails

1. The company has no direct mail expertise.
2. The sales letter is poorly written.
3. The mailing list is not appropriate for the offer.
4. The list itself is inaccurate and does not reflect the desired demographic and/or it was not current.
5. The "offer" is not strong enough to elicit a response from intended target audience.

How to Make Direct Mail Work

1. Use the right list.

- ▶ This is the most important element. It must reflect the group you are targeting and it must be up-to-date.
- ▶ Lists that you might consider for your business to include: seniors with disposable income living in houses or apartments, 45–65 year-old children of seniors, physicians, case managers, lawyers, and trust officers.
- ▶ You can purchase lists from list brokers. You will need to be specific about your demographic and area. Ask how current the list is.
- ▶ Make sure the list broker can supply you the list in the computer program you need – will you be printing labels off a computer in your office? Will you use an outside print house to print up individualized envelopes? Will you be using a mailing house? All may have different programming requirements.
- ▶ You can compile your own lists over time, but this will need to become a conscientious effort—probably assigned as a side task to someone on your team.

2. Get them to open the envelope!

- ▶ If the direct mail piece looks like junk mail, it will become junked mail. You don't want to go so far as to mislead the recipient, but you want them to open the envelope.
- ▶ Think of clever, snappy, intriguing words or images (sometimes a classy, formal look is effective) to put on the outside of the piece that will ensure it is opened.
- ▶ If your mailing is not large (500 or less) the best way to ensure that a direct mail piece will be opened is to *hand address the envelopes*. Gather the team and go at it. This takes a while – but you get responses. Everyone opens a letter addressed by hand! Think about it...*don't you?*
- ▶ Avoid having a "bulk mail" look. Avoid tell-tale cursive typefaces that try to look like handwritten addresses. These are a giveaway that this is a mass-mailing. It's better to use a plain typeface for the addressee and look formal than to look phony.

3. Include a letter.

- ▶ Letters almost always out-pull mailing packages without a letter.
- ▶ Home Care companies should spend some intensive hours in research before they write the first direct mail letter. Ask current clients what they like about doing business with you and begin your letter with those benefits.
- ▶ Write about your clients' needs and problems. List the solutions you can provide to those problems and benefits that you offer.
- ▶ Include testimonials from satisfied clients. Testimonials improve response rates!
- ▶ Emphasize your unique services. (Available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, homemaker services, informative newsletters, etc.)
- ▶ Tell why your staff is special (i.e. carefully selected, screened, referenced, experienced, extensively trained, bonded, supervised, in uniforms, highest paid)
- ▶ Your letter must then invite and convince them to take action!

4. Design your piece for maximum impact.

- ▶ Your headline must get attention. Your headline is really an ad for your sales letter. Ask for action in the headline of your brochure or letter. Get your reader interested.
- ▶ Blue is a good second color, but red ink with black generally gets the best response. Don't over-use red—use it primarily for highlights.
- ▶ Use short words, short sentences, and short paragraphs. Use large print for seniors.

5. Have an irresistible offer.

- ▶ The offer may be in the letter itself, with no other printed piece in the envelope—or the offer may be printed up as a separate piece that accompanies the letter.
- ▶ You must make your offer enticing. The better the offer the better the response. Create a desire. Make your reader really want what you are offering.

6. Make the reader take action.

- ▶ Structure your offer in such a way that you will get a response.
- ▶ You must have a deadline. If you don't have an expiration date you will not have direct response.

7. Make it easy for the recipient to take action.

- ▶ Include a pre-addressed, pre-paid envelope if the offer is a mail-back response.
- ▶ If you want them to call, give them a real name to ask for.

8. Keep good records.

- ▶ If you are testing multiple markets, include a code on your coupon/offer/mail-back card that will enable you to log response results from different mailings and/or offers.
- ▶ Send a test mailing and measure the results. A few dozen or a few hundred letters will give you an idea of the response you can expect.
- ▶ Log your responses daily.
- ▶ Log the repeat business you get from the initial respondents to truly measure the value of that initiating direct mail campaign/offer.
- ▶ Analyze your data and plan your projections for the next campaign so that you earn the maximum profit.

Some Direct Mail Offer Ideas

1. Coupons for a variety of services: foot care, house cleaning, etc. Note: Research shows that seniors, in particular, appreciate and use coupons
2. Drawing for a year of flower delivery (one bouquet a month)
3. One free overnight "patient-sitting"
4. A day of free homemaking services for seniors who have just lost a spouse.
5. New Mother Care gift certificates
6. Free newsletter for seniors

I hope you will try using direct mail if it is at all feasible for your business. Your competitors may not have tried it, which may give you a chance at broader exposure in your market. Plus, you can get a head start on this major marketing method of the future.

The following is a list of brokers to help you with your mailing list:

- ✓ SRDS (Standard Rate & Data Service catalog) found at your local library.
- ✓ Best Mailing Lists (demographic compiled lists) 1-800-NYC-BEST
- ✓ Act One Mailing Lists (demographic compiled lists) 1-800-ACT-LIST