

# Lift Response with These Direct Mail Techniques

It has been said that successful direct marketing is more art than science. Whether you subscribe to this philosophy or believe in the tried and true systematic approach, one thing is certain - there are established techniques proven to lift response. In this article, I'll share some of the more common direct mail techniques that have generated higher open rates and conversions.

**1. Sell from the outside.** If you're sending direct mail without using your envelope to promote your product, potential results aren't being optimized. Research has proven that direct marketers who promote their products by including a message on the outside of the envelope such as a special offer, explanation of package contents, or copy that creates a sense of urgency or curiosity, almost always increase open and conversion rates.

Some examples of effective envelope copy include: "Special Offer", "See inside for details", "Special savings inside", "Chance to win", "Time sensitive materials", etc. The key is to test your envelope copy and/or promotion. The effectiveness of your envelope is also closely tied to the timing of your message, the relevance of your offer, and the segmentation of your mail list.

**2. Use a post-it note.** With advances in mail technology, the ability to add promotional components has greatly improved. The "post-it" note is now available for use on the outside of a standard envelope. The little yellow note helps your mail to stand out and take on a more personal feel. Recent tests have shown about a 10% increase in response rates for those using the post-it note on the outside of their envelopes.

The use of post-it notes is a great method for leveraging the outside of your envelope. Other methods include the use of a standard \$0.39 cent stamp or hand written address. Regardless of which method you chose, the key is to do something different than the masses. Providing your marketing materials in a plain, uninviting envelope is sure to produce less than optimal returns.

**3. Size matters.** The number 10 standard business size envelope has become the mainstay of direct marketers since promotional mailing started decades ago. Because the technology wasn't available to differentiate the envelope, response rates were a direct result of envelope contents (copy and offers).

Today, direct marketers have a variety of options available for making their marketing pieces stand out from the crowd. If you're considering a post-card, oversize it! Standard 3 by 5s get lost in the shuffle. The same is true when it comes to distributing promotional materials in an envelope. Opt for a 9 by 12 versus a standard #10.

**4. Split Test.** The most important aspect of your direct marketing campaign must be the manner in which you organize, control, and manage your mailing. All the possibilities we've mentioned for increasing response rates can only be effective if you identify which ones work best for your market, products, and services.

An effective way to do a split test is to try 2 versions of each concept discussed here. For example, if you're going to try a post-it note, begin by splitting your mail list in half. Mail one set of recipients a plain

envelope and the other half a standard envelope with the post-it note attached. Be sure to add a special code to each mail piece so that individuals who reply can be connected to a specific envelope type. Once you've collected the results and know which type of envelope is more effective, you're ready to test the next concept.

Continue to test your mailings, one at a time, to optimize response. Don't try to test multiple offers or techniques at the same time. Even if you increase overall response rates, you won't be able to identify which marketing element is driving your increased response.

Try these techniques for improving your direct mail response rates. Plan and measure them carefully to ensure continued success and a tangible ROI. Once you've created a control (your highest responding mail piece), try to continually improve response. This will ensure continuous improvement.