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Wednesday
Morning
Fax
from
The
Castle
Press

12 pointers toward successful direct mail—Part 1 of 2

■ Mail to the right lists

Your mailing list is not just a way to reach your market. It is your market, according to mailing authority Robert W. Bly.

Typically, he advises, your house list of customers and prospects will pull double the response of any outside list. Yet, his research indicates, only 50% of business-to-business mailers bother to use such names for mailing purposes. When it comes to outside lists, the best will pull 10X more responses than the worst.

■ Test!

Business marketers rarely track responses or compare the results of lists or different mailing pieces. So they penalize themselves by flying blind. “You don’t know whether something will work until you test it,” says Eugene Schwartz, author of *Breakthrough Advertising*. “And you cannot predict test results based on past experience.”

■ Hinge your mailing package on a letter

A sales letter—which mail recipients tend to perceive as a personal communication, not as advertising—almost always will outpull a postcard, a self-mailer, a folder, or an ad reprint mailed without a letter. Often, by 3 to 1.

■ Write to satisfy your customer’s needs to know

The conventional wisdom urges you to stress product benefits, not features, in

“Dogs used to be the worst thing we worried about on this job.”

—Tony Jackson

Washington, D.C., Postal Worker

direct mail. That depends on your audience, however. Vivian Sudhalter of New York’s Macmillan Software Company observes that engineers and scientists want to know exactly what features a product involves and do not respond to copy that sounds like “advertising.”

■ Make a solid offer

Your offer tells your prospect what he will receive by responding to your mailing.

Many of the most effective mail offers use the magic word “free,” as in “free brochure,” “free technical information,” “free analysis,” “free consultation,” “free demonstration,” “free trial,” “free sample,” and “free catalog.” That’s a lot of good, free advice.

■ Use meaty copy

Superficial copy kills response. Strong, specifically factual writing boosts it. And the price of such effective copy is the copywriter’s capacity to do hard work digging out facts. One star copywriter says that he spends more than 50% of his time in reading, research, and other ditch-digging preparation before he writes a word of any mailing package.

Next Wednesday Fax—Part 2 of 2: Six more proven pointers.

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