



ASSOCIATED PRINTING PRODUCTIONS INC.

## **Printing University 101 Educational Series**

### **Create a Successful Direct Mail Project**

When considering a marketing mail piece, you must always keep in mind that you have only a moment to pique a customer's interest. To capture your prospect's attention, the design and wording of the mailer and package you produce is the key. For instance, a financial planner or healthcare practice trying to build clientele must send mailers that convey trustworthiness. Using the right colors, typeface, and professional look and feel goes a long way toward attracting your target customer. Professional services, such as accountants, medical offices or technology service providers, typically need to develop long-term client relationships. Such companies probably don't need to communicate with a customer more than, say, once a quarter. Retailers, on the other hand, require putting many incentives in the hands of prospects and so need frequent contact. But even then, businesses vary. A refrigerator appliance store needs to acquire customers at a different rate than a bakery does. Here are four of the most common direct mail marketing goals to consider, based on your individual objective, before you begin your design:

**Boost sales.** When you want to attract new customers or broaden your product line or service offerings, you need to include a clear and enticing call to action. Giving customers an immediate taste of your offering usually works best. A tri-fold flyer detailing a free sample or offer is most effective, whether the flyer is all text or has imported photos or illustrations. What's more, you can use one of the folder panels for the address and postage, which makes it very cost-effective. Your discount or special offer can also be showcased in a special tear-off tab at the bottom of the flyer. For an up-market or classier package, consider an envelope and note card that delivers a special gift.

**Reward customers.** To retain and acknowledge the customers you already have, try sending "With Compliments" notes or offers. These should be as personalized as much as possible, designed like a greeting card or personal stationery. Sending a simple "Thank you for your business" card to a valued customer is both an inexpensive and effective way to develop loyalty. Holiday greetings, birthday or anniversary cards, letters that extend special shopping privileges (such as after-hours sales or shop-by-phone offers) will also make customers stick around. You can also send letters and cards that offer discounts or free products that rise in value the more a customer spends.

**Generate leads.** Here, too, the format of your direct mail package and offer depends on what you're selling. Instead of a call-to-action form, the purpose of this direct mail piece is to evoke a

warm reception for the follow-up call you'll make within the week. For example, if an interior designer is using a realtor's list of new homeowners, the mailer should be a personalized and handsome package that welcomes the prospect to the area, offers some valuable community information (such as news of restaurants or schools).

**Building your profile.** When your campaign is designed around brand awareness — say, a grand opening, a start-up service, a new location — the direct mail piece must convey the news and communicate a clear brand message. For professional services, consider an informational type of mailing such as a launch of a newsletter with information for the customer. Just be aware that to build credibility this newsletter should provide a service. It should do more than simply sing your company praises. If you choose to create a newsletter, be sure you have the resources for subsequent issues. Newsletters should go out at least quarterly, if not more often in order to be memorable. Don't forget to try a combination booklet/brochure and newsletter, so you can combine your pitch with news of your industry or field. If you've been dismissing direct mail's potential, think again. Nowadays, with cost-effective programs and customer databases, it's much easier to produce pieces that generate response. Just remember to match that message to a well designed and written mailer.

Some “Best Practices” in preparing an effective direct mail piece are covered in these five steps.

**Select your publication format.** There is a broad array of publication and mail formats that are appropriate for direct mail pieces, including postcards, catalogs, coupons, brochures, newsletters, gift certificates, and more. There are many software applications available to do-it-yourself or APPI is available to assist you with the design.

**Emphasize your brand.** Although each piece should have its own look and message, you still need to make sure it's consistent with your company's other marketing materials and overall branding. Pay attention to color palette, fonts, design elements, and messaging tone. Keep it simple, readable and consistent. Easy formats for direct mail, that are also cost efficient, include oversize postcards, tri-fold mailers and mailers with tear-off response cards that require action from the customer.

**Polish the piece.** Don't overlook the finishing touches and details. Be sure to proof-read all of your work, and, if using photos, make certain that you use high resolution images that will print clean and clear. Make certain that your layout flows and is easy to read and understand by your target audience. Ask someone outside of your business to read and provide feedback regarding the offer and/or the call for action by the customer.

**Prepare for mailing.** You can either print and send the piece yourself or package and send to a printer and/or bulk-mailing house. APPI will be available to help you through each step in order to certain that you are maximizing your marketing dollars.

**Database Preparation:** The key to your database is how current and clean your mailing list is. This determines whether or not your marketing piece lands in the hand of your customer or prospect. Bad or undeliverable addresses, as well as duplicate names, will waste your marketing budget dollars. Some of the important steps you must take are:

- Merge all of your lists and purge out duplicate names
- Run your list through an USPS authorized address correction program (referred to as CASS software) for up to date address information
- Append barcodes to each address that will insure swift delivery to each household

Lastly, something that is often overlooked is designing your Direct Mail piece in accordance with the USPS mailing requirements. The USPS is continually updating requirements and costs for all levels of mail. Whether it's First class, Standard Mail (Bulk), Flat or Non-Profit, APPI is your one-stop source to help you navigate through these requirements and answer any questions you may have when preparing a mailing to your customers. We will help you design a high impact mailer that meets all USPS requirements at the lowest postage cost available to your company.

All of these options will help make your campaign and success!

Please feel free to contact Associated Printing Productions Inc. at 305-623-7600 or for more information, visit our website [www.appi1.com](http://www.appi1.com)