



Direct Mail

For many years, direct mail has been an important marketing vehicle. Even though many companies have turned to email and internet marketing, a targeted and well-produced mail campaign can still be highly effective.

Direct mail campaigns can generate leads, promote special offers, support other campaigns, communicate with customers and raise your visibility in your market. You can be very simple or wildly creative depending on your goals – for example, you can use

- ▶ A handwritten note
- ▶ A simple but effective sales letter
- ▶ A postcard with a four-color image on one side and a printed message on the back
- ▶ A digitally-printed brochure with the prospect's name printed in the headline and body copy
- ▶ A custom piece that you develop for a specific purpose

Additional Tools

- ▶ Vendor Selection
- ▶ Return on Investment
- ▶ Copywriting & Graphic Design

Direct mail can be an efficient vehicle for your company if you focus on strategic, targeted mailings instead of large bulk mail campaigns, which draw very low response rates at much higher costs than online marketing. Instead, consider using mail for small campaigns:

- ▶ Invite current customers and top prospects to an event you're holding at a trade show
- ▶ Send product literature with the prospect's name and custom specifications printed into the brochure itself (via digital printing)
- ▶ Announce a compelling sale

Here are three sample mail campaigns:

GENERATE NEW LEADS	NURTURE EXISTING LEADS	CROSS-SELL CURRENT CUSTOMERS
Mail a personalized, hand-signed letter to targeted prospects. Quickly introduce your value proposition; invite prospects to call or visit your website to view a demo, download a special report, or request a quote. Follow up with a phone call a week later.	Mail a quarterly "industry update" or case study with graphs and reference info – more than you'd be able to provide in an email newsletter. Focus the piece on a typical objection prospects have before they buy.	Develop a piece that delivers a compelling case for your current customers to buy related products and services. Include a strong call-to-action; encourage customers to call or visit your website to learn more and buy.

In B2B, it's better to think about mail as an integral part of a larger campaign. Don't just mail and wait for the phone to ring. Instead, plan a campaign that starts with an introduction via mail, then perhaps a followup phone call from a sales rep and a demo delivered via email.

When you use the right strategy and execution, direct mail can be a strong addition to your marketing arsenal.

BEST CASE	NEUTRAL CASE	WORST CASE
<p>You're happy with the ROI on your mail campaigns.</p> <p>You design each piece to grab attention, convey a simple message and move the prospect toward action.</p> <p>You test your mailings and tweak the headlines, envelopes or offers to increase response, and you use targeted and current lists.</p>	<p>You've had some success with mail campaigns. Sometimes they're spur-of-the moment; you know you could do a better job of planning ahead and focusing your message. You typically use mail in conjunction with a phone call.</p> <p>You don't really test your campaigns and try to improve results, but your response rates are acceptable.</p>	<p>You've used mail but feel it was a waste of money. The list was expensive and didn't necessarily have the right contact name. The mailpiece and postage was expensive and contained a lot of information, yet it didn't generate the response you planned.</p> <p>You had counted on it generating a lot of leads that you ended up having to find elsewhere.</p>

Key concepts & steps

Before you begin

Make sure your direct mail campaign is tied to the goals you've set out in your [marketing plan](#).

Define your goals

Tie your campaign to a specific objective – for example, the number of responses you need or the number of customers you want to generate. Then design your campaign to meet your specific goal.

Target your audience

Narrow your audience as much as you can – you'll be able to speak more directly to your prospects with better results. You'll also save on postage and production.

Focus on the offer

Don't overwhelm your audience with every detail about your product and company. Focus on the offer itself – the purpose for the mailing, the call-to-action. For example, if you're promoting a software demo, explain what the demo will help them learn and why they should request it now. Touch on the key benefits, but don't muddy your message by including every detail about the software and the history of your company.



Develop your content, then your creative

First determine how much copy you'll need, what kind of graphics or photography you'll include, how to promote the offer, etc. Once you've defined the content you'll need to achieve your goals, start the design process. If you're working with a design and/or writing team, explain your requirements in a "creative brief" so you're all on the same page.

Tackle the campaign logistics

Make sure you plan how your piece will be folded, stuffed, addressed, stamped, mailed, etc. If you're running large campaigns, you may want to hire a vendor to handle this step.

Test, measure and continually improve

Mail is a terrific media for testing – you can select a random set of records from your list, send your mailing, measure your response, then tweak the mailing and send it to another subset. You can improve the list targeting, your offer, the envelope design, the copy and the design itself. Commit to continuous improvement and use what you learn in all future campaigns.

What's next?

Measure your ROI and compare it against your ROI for other media. Mail can be a substantial investment and it should produce a return that is as great or better than your other media.

