



Big Results From Little Mail

Postcard mailing campaigns can hit the mark.

During a recent meeting with Aaron and Jack Sweat from Advertising Made Easy, a direct-marketing firm in Dublin, Ohio, the two told me about some campaigns they were running for a client. Using the same exact message and offer, they ran the promotion once as a letter and again as an oversized postcard. The results from the postcard mailing were far better than the envelopes.

Because of its color, shape, size and feel, a postcard actually jumps out of a pile of mail. Instead of going directly into the round file unopened, consumers can't help but at least glance at the offer. Customers see your message and your call-to-action without having to bother opening an envelope.

Strategies to Consider

Postcard mailing can be especially cost-effective when sent to a targeted audience rather than mass-mailed. You can mail postcards to previous customers about a private sale event or to promote a new product. You can mail information about audio products to customers who just purchased a flat screen. Target customers who purchased appliances from you five to seven years ago with an Energy Star offer. Companies like Nielson's Claritas work with retailers to define the areas where customers are most likely to buy specific kinds of products.

Home furnishings company Bed Bath & Beyond has built their entire business on their oversized blue postcards offering 20 percent off one item. Savvy buyers have learned that they never expire and that you can use one for each item you buy.

Personalize your mailing. "Occupant" doesn't live at my address, but Elly does. Most mailing houses or direct-marketing firms can help you personalize not only the label, but the selling message itself.

Need to Know

Postcard Marketing Strategies

- Postcards jump out of a pile of mail.
- Postcards are more cost-effective than direct mail.
- Personalize mailings.
- Promote unbeatable offers.
- Print larger size postcards.
- Professionalize your design.
- Do it again and again.

Make Them an Offer...

Effective postcard campaigns have unbeatable offers. Be creative. Think grocery store. Buy one get one. Buy a washer get \$100 off on a dryer. Buy a sofa and get a loveseat. Offer a free gift with purchase.

Try "bring in this postcard to enter a drawing for a..." with no purchase necessary. You can get customers in the store and use the opportunity to capture their e-mail addresses for future e-marketing.

Show pictures of several items with a "choose your discount" offer. Some may choose free financing while others will choose delivery rebates.

Show a hot low price on a complete stainless kitchen or show rebates of \$100 for two appliances, \$200 for three and \$400 for four.

Print larger sizes. Oversized postcards (4x6 or 5x7) are more expensive to print and mail, but you have more room for your message and they'll attract more attention. You can use the front for a screaming hot offer and use the back for the details. Postcards as large as 8x5 or even 11x6 still qualify for bulk-rate postage.

Professionalize your design. All your marketing promotes your image. Use a good copywriter and graphic designer to help you pick out words, slogans and images that will drive home your message. Use bright colors and bold, easy-to-read type fonts. Consider using white type in a bright red burst or black type over a yellow one.

Do it again and again. Like all advertising, you may not get the exact results you hope from your first mailing. Try small mailings with different offers and different looks and see what works best. Track results to see what offers work the best, which zip codes deliver the most customers and when mailings are most effective.

The key to any advertising is consistency. It's always risky to try new marketing ideas. Failures can be expensive. In the long run, though, it can cost way more to keep doing what you've always been doing if you're not bringing customers to your door. For my money, I'd rather gamble on something new. **DS**