



## 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half

The push to go fully digital has grown continuously stronger over the years, with online marketing taking over as the staple marketing channel for most companies. Check the mail that's coming through the US Postal Service though, and it won't surprise you that direct mail marketing is still a powerful marketing tool, and for certain markets (the elderly, for instance) preferred over digital marketing, depending on the product.

Companies with a strong marketing arm are still reaping rewards from this supposedly "old-school" approach, largely because of its ability to target your prospects about as precisely as digital marketing – especially in cases where your prospects are less likely to see you online. Here are 20 mistakes to avoid (keeping in mind that there are plenty more) so you can take full advantage of the effectiveness of direct mail advertising for your next campaign.



### #1 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: **THINKING IT'S OBSOLETE**

Contrary to popular belief, direct mail marketing still holds its own as a marketing gem in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Up to 73% of Americans report that they prefer direct mail over other advertising media because they can read it at their own convenience. It also offers a 29% return on investment, just 1% behind social media and much higher than paid search (online) ads. You may be pleasantly surprised at the bump in ROI that direct mail can have on your marketing efforts.



## **#2 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: RELYING ONLY ON DIGITAL MARKETING**

As the world accelerates towards total digitization, you may be tempted to limit your marketing efforts to online only. However, the ever-more competitive environment for eyeballs online could limit your campaign's effectiveness. With the right offer to the right target market, you'll have your prospect's full attention and a sales accountability that rivals online marketing. And since fewer marketers are using direct mail compared to "the old days," your approach won't have to fight as hard to break through the clutter of cat videos at which online marketing excels.

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## **#3 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: USING IT IN ISOLATION**

A Compu-Mail study showed that combining direct mail advertising with digital marketing efforts can increase leads by up to 53% and ROI by up to 60%. While direct mail marketing is typically an effective value-add, don't expect it to do the entire job itself. Send recipients to your website or a landing page or ask them to share something using specific hashtags on social media to help increase engagement on and offline.

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## **#4 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: NOT RESEARCHING YOUR OFFER**

During their testing period, one company found that phrasing their offer as "buy one, get one free" gave them 40% more customers than a 50% off deal, even though they were essentially the same offer. Your customers will respond differently depending on how you phrase your offer, so be sure to research which ones work best. To get started, chat with online email services like Constant Contact, Survey Monkey and Mail Chimp to compare the most efficient ways to test your offer.

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### **#5 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: CONFUSING BRAND WITH BRANDING**

It's remarkable how few marketing specialists know what a "brand" is. Is it the logo? The typeface? How your ads portray you? Nope. It's the sum total of all these elements and the overall impression they leave in the prospect's perception of them. Think of it the way you think of someone's "personality." It's not one thing – it's everything about them that makes up their personal "brand." Same thing with companies and products. The "brand" is what people perceive. "Branding" is what you do to shape that perception. In other words, your brand is bigger than any one element, and your branding should keep that in mind with every marketing move you make.

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### **#6 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: NOT USING THE ENVELOPE**

The envelope is the first point of contact between you and the customer, so you need to make an indelible first impression. Some studies show that oversized envelopes offer a higher response rate – in the 5% range – compared to postcards and catalogs that offer a 4.25% and 3.9% response rate respectively. So get creative. Experiment with different colors and finishes and offers, and don't hesitate to make your envelopes big and unique enough to pique your recipients' curiosity right away.

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### **#7 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: SKIPPING THE SALES TEAM INPUT**

For years, the sales and marketing teams have been at loggerheads with each other, when in fact, these are every business's dynamic duo. Some studies show that up to 90% of content created by the marketing department never gets used by the sales team. Before launching your direct marketing campaign, solicit and utilize input from the sales team to make sure everyone is on the same page.

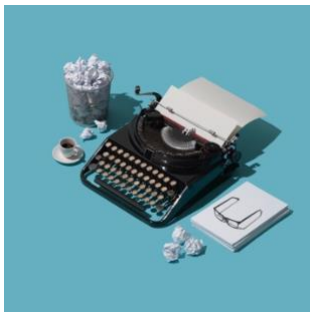
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### **#8 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: SENDING BLIND MAILERS**

Mailers that don't tell you what the offer is upfront – blind mailers – are a risky gamble. So is sending out mailers that haven't been tested, which could use up a significant amount of your marketing budget, especially since direct mail advertising can be relatively pricey. Rather, test your campaign in small, highly targeted segments. Use tracking codes, unique coupons, dedicated phone lines and/or dedicated URLs to help you measure the results of the campaign. Then put into practice all that you learned from the data in subsequent campaigns.

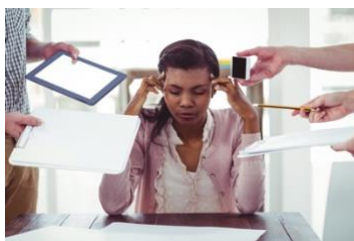
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### **#9 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: USING CLICHÉ RIDDEN COPYWRITING**

Lots of marketers focus on the design elements of their mailers without giving much attention to the copy. Glib, boring, cliché-burdened or pedantic copy can hurt the effectiveness of your campaign. Yes, people DO still read, especially if your offer is enticing enough. Keep in mind that clarity is more important than cleverness. Tell a story in a captivating tone that communicates your offer quickly and clearly and you'll be halfway there. Or try a completely different approach. Would a poem work for your brand? Only if it's the right one. And nothing that rhymes with Nantucket, please.

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### **#10 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: TAKING IT ALL ON YOURSELF**

While the prospect of saving money is attractive, handling everything in your direct mail campaign can take you away from your core business. If you plan on running a sizeable campaign, look for direct mail experts who know the tricks of the trade and can get you more value for money.

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### **#11 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: NOT AUTOMATING FULLY**

Direct mail marketing makes little sense unless the process is automated. So now you're supposed to become a processes expert? Not necessarily. The good news is that you don't have to figure it all out yourself. Lots of companies specialize in handling, (i.e., automating) direct mail advertising from start to finish. Unless your list is less than 100 recipients long, they'll be happy to save you from the cumbersome process of preparing individual packages and figuring out a confusing array of USPS requirements.



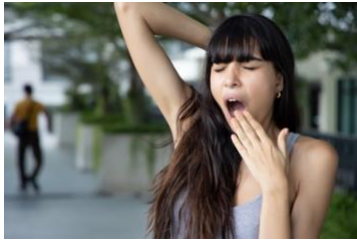
### **#12 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: SENDING CAMPAIGNS AT A BAD TIME**

All your marketing efforts could go down the drain simply because of bad timing. Weirdly, data shows that the best time to send out mailers for products ordinarily sold at retail is during the holidays when people are already expecting mail. Or try sending mail on a customer's birthday. If your customers' attention is subject to seasonality - say you market to farmers who are largely unavailable during harvest time - then send your mailers in their off-season. For products like mattresses that *never* have an off-season, better to continue a lower level of advertising continuously, so your brand will be there when the customer is ready to buy.



### **#13 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: MISSING OUT ON MILLENNIALS**

Think millennials don't respond to direct mail marketing? Here's an interesting stat: 90% of millennials say they prefer direct mail to emails, with 73% of these saying that direct mail makes them feel special. If you want to attract more millennials to your business, include them in your target market for direct mail marketing.



#### **#14 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: NOT GETTING CREATIVE**

The biggest advantage that direct mail advertising has over digital marketing is that it gives you a golden opportunity to engage all five senses. Stand out with your marketing by getting creative with your mailers. Get inspired. For example, consider the Nike limited edition stadium shoebox, which played the sound of a crowd cheering when it was opened. In that case, the marketing went way beyond “buying a shoe” to engage with the entire shoe-owning experience. How could your product accomplish similar magic?

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#### **#15 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: FAILING TO FOLLOW UP**

Failing to get back in touch with your prospects can result in you not knowing just how many people have engaged with your campaign. Once you send out your mailers, follow up with a call or an email to find out if they received it. If yes, now is the time for your pitch, and if they haven't, send it out right away. You can also use the follow up as a way to show appreciation for your customers' patronage.

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#### **#16 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: PAYING FOR PROSPECT LISTS**

Marketers generally agree that an organically-grown mailing list is gold. Conversely, buying a prospect list can jeopardize your ROI, especially if the list hasn't been updated. Long term, it pays to invest time in building your own list from scratch with customers that have engaged with you elsewhere to increase your chances of conversion. After all, according to the Data and Marketing Association, house lists offer an average 9% response rate, nearly double that of prospect lists, which come in with a response rate of only about 5%.

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### **#17 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: NOT CLEANING-UP A “DIRTY” LIST**

Whether you use your own house list or you opt to purchase or rent a prospect list, be sure to review it before launching the campaign. Does the new repeat any recipients that are already on your list? What’s the source of the names on the new list? Is that source likely to result in prospects for your product as well? And of course, was the new list developed using spam techniques? There are many other considerations in reviewing your list that your direct mail experts can help you with. Take your time and do it right and you won’t waste money on cold prospects. You’ll also increase the chances of your recipients actually opening and responding to your mailer.

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### **#18 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: APPEALING TO INTELLECT INSTEAD OF EMOTION**

Consumer rationality assumes that people will look for the most monetary value from an offer. However, people don’t always equate money to value. 95% of all decisions are made subconsciously. That means your offer needs to speak to the customers at a deeper level than just the money, though this plays a not-insignificant role.

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### **#19 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: NOT PERSONALIZING YOUR OFFER**

Personalization goes beyond just using your customer’s first name. Some effective ways of personalizing your direct mail campaigns include sending handwritten notes, using photos that reflect their age group and lifestyle, or using personalized URLs that lead them to a landing page with their own details. An appropriately personalized campaign can increase response rates by up to 30%.

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## **#20 of 20 Mistakes That Could Be Cutting the Effectiveness of Your Direct Mail Advertising by Half: DISREGARDING ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS**

We all get “junk” mail, and the reason many recipients disdain it is because of its potentially adverse effects on the environment. However, there are ways that you can make your campaign more environment-friendly. Use recycled material, make sure your mailers are reusable, and limit waste by leaning toward on-demand printing when it makes sense financially.