

HOW TO WRITE COPY FOR DIRECT MAIL

10 Tips to Make Your Promotions More Effective

Whether you're using direct mail to stay connected to your current customer base or promoting a product or service, how you word your message is pivotal to the success of the mailer. **Here are 10 tips that InfoUSA copywriters use to improve response:**

① **Research your audience.**

Before writing, learn all you can about your target audience. What are their challenges and concerns? How will your product or service help them?

The first two feats a mailer must achieve are to earn the reader's trust and identify with their needs. Research will help you to walk in their shoes for a while.

② **Strive for a personal, conversational tone.**

Take the time to address your readers by name, and make the message more about helping them than just about your product or service. Use "you" more than "I" or "we".

The most persuasive style of copywriting is conversational in nature, simply because it's easier to follow. It should be no more difficult to understand your direct mail offer than it would be sitting at a café with the prospect, describing your product or service over a cup of coffee. Your copy should be as easy to follow as a conversation with a friend.

③ **Spend time on your headlines and sub-headlines.**

Decide on the most compelling reason people in the target audience group would read your promotion and begin speaking to that immediately. If your message addresses people's needs or desires, they'll continue reading.

Try to make your opening headline as brief as possible. Eight words is typically the maximum length that most people can digest at a glance. 90% of your readers will decide from the headline alone whether to read your promotion, so take steps to ensure the headline gets read.

The headline can be followed by a supporting and credible sub-headline. Sub-headlines don't need to be, but are often longer than eight words – a succinct headline will draw in the reader's attention and pave the way for a longer sub-headline.

If your headline implies a claim – perhaps your company was the first in your industry– the sub-headline or a sidebar can support the authenticity of the headline. Readers are very discerning these days, and most promotional copy is assumed to be hype unless your brand identity is firmly established and highly credible (or the claim is followed by supporting evidence).

4 Use their language.

Professionals, interest groups and industries all have their own lingo. By taking the time to understand and use industry terminology, you're showing readers that you're in the same boat with them. If your product or service clearly makes for smoother sailing in their industry, reader interest will be strong. It's a competitive disadvantage to miss out on the latest and greatest industry tools and services, so become an industry insider and your promotions will get noticed.

5 Weave in the big picture.

Stop and consider what you're truly offering at the level of aspiration. Does your product or service have an aspirational feature? If so, think of ways to get that across with copy, design or both. Ideally your mailing will dovetail with the dreams and aspirations of your target audience, through both copy and design, and even the promotion itself.

6 Create an unbeatable, risk-free offer.

Some ideas: a discount, a free trial, a free consultation, a contest, a free or discounted e-book, a coupon. Whatever you offer, send it to an interested audience, and make it hard to resist. Many direct marketers will set their opening price-point so low that they only break even on the promotion. The logic behind this is that most new customers will continue to buy from you once a relationship is established – and also tell their friends about you. If you consider all the time and energy it takes for a prospect to learn about your company and set up an account, many direct marketers consider it a fair trade off to simply break even on the initial promotion. Include a guarantee of satisfaction – the first sale is the hardest to get, so use everything in your sales toolbox to make it easy for the prospect to get started with your company.

7 Tell them exactly how to begin and guide them through it immediately.

Do you want the reader to call you, visit your website, fill out an enclosed response form, or send an email? Make it easy to do business with you by including a clear call to action. If the response is email based, set up a very succinct auto-responder so they know what the next steps are – and if possible, follow up personally as soon as you can.

8 Give them an expiration date.

A time limit on your offer can turn a procrastinator into a customer. Also, if your offer is truly valuable and compelling, you may not want to leave it open-ended. There is such

a thing as having too many orders to fill, and many direct marketers have been relieved to see a promotion expire. This will give you a chance to catch a breather and plan your next successful promotion.

9 **Don't underestimate a good Postscript.**

A good percentage of people are going to read the postscript before the rest of your letter. Use that important space to summarize the most compelling part of the offer. If you don't craft a compelling P.S. it can actually work against the promotion. It's better to leave the P.S. off the letter if you feel it detracts from a strong headline.

10 **Don't forget to spell check and proofread.**

Your mailer is probably a prospect's first impression of you. Take the time to make it shine.

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