



The Insider's Guide to Postcard Marketing

10 Critical Best Practices You Ought to Know to Significantly Improve Your Results



**Opportunity
Knocks™**
Targeted Postcard Marketing

Your Step-By-Step Guide to Mastering Postcard Marketing



For over 20 years, Opportunity Knocks has been producing industry-leading direct mail marketing tools that have helped companies grow their business – without breaking the bank. Throughout all this time, it is safe to assume, we have learned a few things along the way!

While we work hard to ensure that all the direct mail postcards we produce have all the elements we are about to explore below, many businesses still love to create their own marketing pieces, and we totally support them in that effort.

Consequently, we have filtered through all the confusing rules to provide you with what we confidently feel are the 10 critical BEST practices of postcard marketing you ought to know to maximize your results.

This checklist is designed to quickly guide you through the process of creating a highly responsive postcard based on analytics derived from millions of postcard mailings over the past 20 years. Let's take a look...

10 Critical *Best Practices* of Postcard Marketing



- 1** *Headline:* To create an eye-catching headline that grabs people's attention, think of three main features and benefits that make you different from your competition. In other words, why should people choose you?
- 2** *Who Are You:* People are distracted and have short attention spans. Tell them what you do and why they should be interested in your product or service. Why are you their best choice?
- 3** *Why Should the Prospect Believe You:* Anyone can claim they are the best in the business. To establish trust, think about what type of credibility or experience your company offers? (i.e. Number of years in business, satisfied customers, case studies, awards, experience, BBB A+ rating, etc.)
- 4** *Competitive Advantages:* The competition is working hard every day to win over your potential customers. To set yourself apart, think about your Unique Selling Proposition or more simply put, what do you have that competitors do not?
- 5** *Testimonials:* A common problem is the temptation to say your company is the best at everything: best quality, fastest delivery, lowest price. These claims question credibility. Prove yourself with external testimonials and build trust!
- 6** *Big Promise:* Irresistible claims highlight your solution in a desirable way to boost interest. Think about claims you can make about your product or service. (i.e. "Friends will swear you installed a brand new lawn after we fertilize it!")
- 7** *Create Drama:* Prospect response is driven by their emotions, attitudes, and aspirations. Think about what happy feelings people will experience after they purchase from you. (i.e. Before and after photos or pictures of you and happy customers.)
- 8** *Guarantees:* Nothing is worse than empty promises! Think about what iron-clad guarantees you can make and promises you can keep. (i.e. Money back, 100% satisfied or it's FREE, only pay if you are pleased.)
- 9** *Offers:* Perfect buyers are shopping for the best solution at the right price. Capture their attention right away with a perceived high value incentive. Think about what you can offer beyond the industry standard to seal the deal. What are you willing to give up to get a new customer to buy? (i.e. FREE, % off, gift card, BOGO, no obligation, no strings attached, etc.)
- 10** *Deadline:* People are easily distracted and do not respond unless it is convenient for them. Get people to respond sooner than later by creating a "sense of urgency" or "fear of missing out." How long will you honor your offer before it expires? (i.e. 30 days from postmark, limited time only, etc.)

1 BEST PRACTICE #1 - HEADLINE

Your headline is the first thing your customer will read; get it wrong and it'll be the only thing they read.

Direct mail postcards live and die on their headlines. You need to make your direct mail headline compelling and attention-grabbing, as well as set the theme for the entire mailpiece. With that one phrase, you must let the reader know what he or she could possibly gain from reading any further.

A postcard with a short, smart and direct headline has been shown to get about 20 times the response compared to a postcard where the headline is weak or non-existent. Let's take a look at some of the potential ways to begin building that all-important headline.

Your Unique Selling Proposition

Your product should have at least one thing which makes it stand out from all the competition; the most compelling benefit of purchasing your product. Whether it's bigger, stronger, faster, smaller or cheaper, if you're selling in a saturated market, put that difference front and center - in your headline.

For example:

- Presenting The Lightest Laptop in the World
- Start your own Mexican Restaurant Franchise - it's Easy!

Just Do It!

Telling your reader to do something in the headline is an effective way to grab their attention and motivate them. Command headlines are direct and take a positive and assertive tone.

For example:

- Decorate your Home with Luscious Italian Fabrics
- Cut your Home's Energy Consumption in ½ with Efficient Solar Panels

Those Big Benefits

If your product doesn't have that one selling point, think of the three main benefits your customer will get if they buy your product. Can you mention these benefits in a concise, enticing headline?

For example:

- Imagine a Light Golf Caddy that's Durable and Fashionable...
- Are you ready for Fast, Secure, Affordable Web Hosting?

The Question Headline

Questions stick out in copy, and a question headline begs the customer to answer the question in their head. The best question headlines therefore tend to expect a yes from the customer or point to the main benefit of your product as the answer.

For example:

- Are You Struggling to Pay your Bills?
- Do You Want your Pets to Stay Healthy?
- Do You Feel Undervalued at Work?

These questions can lead into details explaining how your product or service can solve the reader's issue or enhance their life for the better.



Headline

2 BEST PRACTICE #2 - WHO ARE YOU (THE KILLER B'S!)

One of the important parts of your direct mail postcard is conveying who it is being sent from. Readers will make an immediate snap decision about how much attention they will give your direct mail from first impressions. Who you are and how this information is conveyed is a big part of hooking them in.

Be Concise

It is estimated that consumers see up to 5,000 marketing messages every day. A long, rambling postcard is likely to be quickly thrown away - people simply don't have the time or patience to read it. Trim your wording over and over till you get the shortest, punchiest way of saying who you are and what your company is all about.

Be Clear

Use simple language that accurately portrays where your company is coming from. The wording should be enticing the customer to read more, showing them how your company is the one company that can solve their problem, even if it's a problem they didn't know that they had.

Be Focused

You have seconds to impress a potential customer with your direct mail, don't waste them on superfluous information. There may be many things about your company that you're proud of or you'd like the customer to know, but keep these for the secondary marketing level, such as when the customer visits your website or calls your business. Keep on message, and the message will come through all the stronger.

Be Congruent

Conveying who you are in your mailing is not just about the words - everything counts. A high quality printed postcard can suggest luxury or decadence, simple paper can suggest cheapness or a bargain. The typeface choices can project your company as friendly, modern, professional, local or trendy. All design choices influence how your customer sees who you are.

Who Are You

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3 BEST PRACTICE #3 - WHY SHOULD THE PROSPECT BELIEVE YOU?

Every marketing message competes to be the most fabulous proposition that the customer has ever heard of. Simple consumer items like cleaning liquids or soaps are able to take on magical qualities in advertising, and due to this hyperbole and fear of scams consumers are increasingly wary of unsolicited marketing messages from companies they know little about.

How can you get prospects to believe the message you are sending them? The answer is in building a sense of authenticity and trustworthiness in your direct mail.

Authenticity and Trust

Think about your product; if you were buying your product from a company, what would you want that company to be before you trusted them with your money? Every product is different, but often when we buy goods we look for a sizeable company that has been around for some years, with knowledge and experience, a great track record of supplying the best products in a niche and customer service that can be relied upon if things go wrong.

Improving Your Message

Try to include some of these details about your company in your direct mail:

- **Longevity** - Your company has been around for many years, because you are dependable.
- **Size** - Your company has many employees, offices, locations, because you are successful.

- **Sales** - Your company has made many sales of this product, because it is excellent.
- **Experience** - Your company has the most knowledgeable and experienced staff, so it knows exactly how to offer the best product on the market.
- **Happy previous customers** - Testimonials show previous customers were satisfied, because the product solved their problem.
- **Authority** - Your product has been recognized by those in authority on the subject, such as doctors or university professors.
- **Great customer service** - your contact number is there for all to use, anytime.
- **Industry-recognized** - Your company or product has won awards, showing it undisputedly to be the best.

Note that even if your company is not the biggest in the industry, for example, you can still say it is one of the biggest without losing too much power from your message. This allows even a relatively new business to appear more solid.

Where possible, include facts and figures that back up your statements. For example, "lots of people buy our product" is a weak message compared to the more concrete "in 2014, over 156,000 people bought our flagship model..." Soon, your marketing direct mail is looking much more believable.

Why Should People Believe You



4 BEST PRACTICE #4 - COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

Although many entrepreneurs like to think that their product is new and unique, the truth is that almost all successful products and services are based on existing ideas. On the one hand, this is only sensible business - it makes sense to follow a path that has already proven successful, and customers are more open to ideas that they have met in the past and are comfortable with. On the other hand, it can make your company or product difficult to stand out in the sea of competition.

This is why a marketing message which latches onto one competitive advantage can be the most powerful. Customers can immediately understand all of the benefits of the product you are selling based on the original proposition, and can also instantly come to grips about how your product is even better.

For example:

- Like Netflix, but Cheaper!
- Imagine a 7" Android Tablet PC that weighs only 3lbs...
- Broadband internet: same price, double the speed.

All of these examples offer a solid base of understanding from potential customers, and also impart to the customer specifically how this product is better than others in the niche.

Your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

Not sure what your best differentiator is? Choosing that one thing that makes you stand out from the crowd is easier than you think. Have a look at all of your current competitors, their strengths and weaknesses. Often, the chink in your competitor's armor is where you can differentiate your product or service the best. You can even turn one of their strengths into a weakness:

- Do they undercut everyone on price? Offer higher quality for a little bit more.
- Are they a monopoly with thousands of customers? Be the exciting, different, new kid on the block.
- Are they big and powerful? You're small, family-run, and more focused on customer satisfaction.

Competitive Advantages

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5 BEST PRACTICE #5 - REFERENCES OR TESTIMONIALS

Few people want to be the first to take the plunge, even if the idea does look alluring. Social proof is a huge part of most purchasing decisions – people want to know that other people that they respect have made the same choice in the past, validating their own decision to go ahead and buy your product. Testimonials offer that social proof, and are an important part of your marketing effort.

The Power of Testimonials

It is undeniable that testimonials and references are powerful sales converters. In a study performed by a behavioral research company, social proof was shown to be a stronger motivator when it came to purchasing decisions than low prices did. Another study showed that testimonials are the driving force behind 20-50% of customers' purchasing decisions.

Despite this compelling evidence, less than one third of companies are actively seeking out good references or testimonials from their happy clients – a mistake that you certainly should not make when marketing your products.

Who Should I Get to Make the Testimonial?

Consider your audience and whether they will align themselves with the person making the testimonial. If, for example, your primary customers are senior software developers, then a glowing review from a high profile senior software developer will have the reader putting themselves in this satisfied developer's boots.

For great testimonials without the cost, scour online review websites. Amazon, Yelp, Google reviews, etc. – you'll be bound to find some glowing reviews of your products. When possible, try to get the consent of the reviewer and ask them for further details on themselves and how they use your product.

Similarly, ensure your staff are trained to flag and note any incoming strong positive feedback from customers that could be used in the future as a testimonial.

Great Testimonials

The small details are what sell a good testimonial. Consumers need to believe the testimonial is genuine and not just something that your company has written to sell the product.

An image of the user of your product is a big bonus; ensure that it includes their face which lends credibility to the testimonial. Having them pictured using your product is another step up, and if the image helps show how the product can be used it kills two birds with one stone.

Ultimately, testimonials are affirmations that solidify the readers' own feelings about your product, making the customer comfortable and pushing them from potential customer to convert.

Testimonials



6 BEST PRACTICE #6 - THE BIG PROMISE

A big promise, often in the headline of your direct marketing postcard, is in effect your product's mission statement. It lets the customer know, clearly and concisely, what they should expect if they make the smart decision to purchase your product or service.

- "Your friends will be begging you for the recipe when you use our chicken stock."
- "Your new roof will hold up against all elements - whatever the weather."
- "The whitest laundry on the street, and in just one wash!"

Modern consumers expect you to use a little artistic license, so you are free to project the idea of a perfect world where your product has solved a big hole in the customer's life - perhaps a hole that they didn't even realize existed until your marketing hit their mailbox.

A Promising Start

What makes for a good promise? Think about the problem that your product or service solves for your customer. It could be something simple like mounting dirty dishes, or more complex like debt issues or feelings of inadequacy.

With your promise, you are offering the customer a glimpse of what their life could be like if they purchase your product.

Offer the customer the solution to his problem through the promise of your product:

- Dirty dishes banished forever - in a jiffy!
- Get rid of credit card debts with just one phone call!
- Always under the weather? Kick start your immune system with X12 Formula!

Product Soul-Searching

To accurately portray the promise of your product to your customer, you must carefully assess your company, your products, your competition and your customers. The killer feature of your product or the reason people choose your company is often very different from your own perception.

- Get feedback from your current customers on why they purchased your products.
- Keep abreast of the competition to zero in on your unique selling proposition.
- Remember that different groups of customers may respond to different promises.
- Ensure you can keep your promises!

Big promises are a great way to have your reader visualizing themselves using your product. We've developed many such promises for successful businesses in the past; feel free to contact us with any questions or queries on our marketing services.

Big Promise

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7 BEST PRACTICE #7 - CREATE DRAMA

Why do people buy your products or services?

It seems a simple question, but for most companies it's surprisingly hard to define. Consumers and B2B customers alike largely make their buying decisions based on emotions.

If your product is a motorcycle for example, people ultimately decide whether or not to buy it not for its technical specifications or even from a logical list of benefits, but simply for emotional reasons. They buy for the promise of fun, freedom, excitement, increased mobility or social proof. You won't sell a single one if you don't try to appeal to their emotions, it'll just be a bit of metal with wheels.

There are techniques we can use to increase such emotional responses and increase conversions. Print advertisements that elicit an emotional response have been shown to be 2 times more effective than those that don't.

Every Purchasing Decision is an Emotional One

If you think your product or service is something that doesn't warrant an emotional response, you're dead wrong. Emotion plays a huge part in every purchasing decision. Some marketers make the mistake of thinking their marketing must be straight-laced, professional, boring - but decision makers in every industry are emotional human beings who want to be persuaded to buy your product.

Google's research shows that B2B customers are actually more emotionally attached to the brands they purchase than consumers, 5 times more likely to be swayed by feelings they have for the brand.

Think about the real motivations behind those purchase decisions before you try to market your B2B product.

Positive and Negative Emotions in Marketing

Images can create emotional reactions faster than text. For example, a "before and after" picture is a good way to show customers the benefits of your product and elicit an emotional response, or show pictures of you with your happy clients.

Often, a negative emotion is more powerful than a positive one. Your product or service should solve a problem for the prospect, so create your marketing to associate a strong negative feeling about this problem. Selling debt consolidation? Play up the deep worry and torment that comes with being in debt.

Of course, your service is the answer to getting away from all this negative emotion. Selling insurance? Paint a picture of something terrible happening if the prospect doesn't have insurance, the guilt, the torment, the embarrassment. Your company is here to ensure that never happens.

Flattery Can Get You Everywhere

As another example, a recent study has shown that consumers have poor defenses against flattery. Even if they don't know your company from Adam, readers are more likely to receive your message positively if you subtly flatter them.

Clearly, there are many ways to get an emotional response from your reader. Getting the right level of drama takes experience. Too little drama will bore the reader, too much will feel like you're pressuring them into a sale.



Create Drama
Before and after photos work great!

8 BEST PRACTICE #8 - GUARANTEES

Why do marketing messages often include guarantees that seem to be tough to fulfil? It's because they show your company's pride and confidence in the product, help sidestep concerns customers may have about your product, and ultimately compel the customer to buy. Consider these confident headlines:

- "Find our imported wines cheaper anywhere else and we'll refund you double the difference."
- "You won't find this product anywhere else."
- "Next day delivery - guaranteed."

These types of guarantees grab the reader's attention. They show the customer one of the main benefits of choosing your service and that you are willing to back up your statements.

A great guarantee offers the customer something in return if you fail to come through on your guarantee - money back, or even the service for free, so it removes a further barrier that's stopping the customer from making that purchase.

Choosing a Guarantee

- For a memorable and powerful guarantee, it is smart to truly evaluate your product or service offering. What's your unique selling proposition that sets your company apart from the rest? Incorporate it into your guarantee. Are you the lowest cost? Offer a guarantee to best all other prices the customer can find. Do you pride yourself on selling only the highest quality goods? Offer a no-quibble returns policy.
- You can often use your guarantee to sweep aside the largest concerns that your customers may have. Think about the biggest reason why your customer might be afraid of purchasing your product. Use your guarantee to put those fears to rest.
- Finally, think about what part of your service could really be attractive to your customer, whether it is fast delivery, durability or exclusivity, and incorporate this into your guarantee.

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Guarantees

9 BEST PRACTICE #9 - OFFERS

Special offers are a valuable way to boost the sales from direct marketing that can be used to incent a sale, set a deadline, brush away fears about a product or offer increased value.

Your special offers should be simply irresistible to the reader, and preferably come at little or no cost to you. Special offers work so well there is really little reason not to have a special offer(s) as part of your direct marketing postcard.

It's Free!

The offers that get the biggest uptake are those that offer something for free. Here's a few common ways you can weave this into your marketing:

- **Buy One, Get one Free!** - It's been proven that this message works much better than '50% off'.
- **Free Workshops, Manuals or Training** - Best for more complex products, offer a free workshop, or online training in how to use the product or service. This can ultimately make you more money in the future as the customer gets more from your service and feels comfortable using it, allowing you to upsell and cross-sell other services later.
- **Free Delivery** - Simply factor in the delivery cost to the price.

- **Free Quotation or Initial Consultation** - Gets your foot in the door.
- **Free X if you buy Before April 30th!** - Great for setting a deadline on your sale to motivate a purchase. Specify in detail the gift you will be offering to help the customer visualize it.
- **Free X with every Purchase** - Use this to offer more value to a purchase. Again, be specific about what the extra incentive is, and keep it related to the main purchase (e.g. free insurance for 1 year with every Ford Mondeo.)

Other Offers

You don't need to give something away as part of your offer, there are other ways to sweeten the deal for the reader and make the purchase a "no-brainer".

For example, offer better payment terms like "buy now, pay next year". These offers work well when the customer may struggle to purchase a big-ticket item immediately. Offer the customer a percentage discount for being a loyal customer if their purchases have dropped off recently, bringing them back into the fold and making them feel valued. Offer a free trial of your product if customers may not trust your company because it's new or untested.



Offers

10 BEST PRACTICE #10 - DEADLINE

You can have everything else lined up perfectly in your direct marketing, but the customer will fail to pull the trigger and purchase your product. So, what are they waiting for? Marketing messages without a clear sense of urgency result in customers delaying response. You're going to need to strike fear into the heart of your potential customer to get them to act - fear that they might be losing out.

Fear of Loss

Research has shown that "fear of loss" is a significantly stronger motivator for people than desire to gain. Consumers are in general more motivated by the idea of losing something that they already own than the gains they'd receive from something new.

You can use this powerful idea in your direct marketing in your headlines, promises and guarantees. Instead of extolling the benefits of buying your product, express the loss the customer will feel if they don't buy it:

- Instead of: "Save up to \$500 on long distance calls each year!"
- Try: "Stop losing \$500 each year on long distance calls!"

This subtle difference can significantly increase conversions.

Fear of Losing Out

Choosing a deadline can be tricky. You want to choose an expiry time that is not so far in the future that all urgency is lost, but you also need to allocate enough time for the customer to become acquainted with your product and to get into buying mode. Each product and marketing campaign is different and you will need to play this by ear.

If you are unsure of an exact date to use, a deadline based on limited stocks can also be a motivator. Suggesting that only the first 100 sales get a free gift, for example, takes pressure off you to set a date but still has a limited effect on consumers' actions.

Getting Them Off the Fence

Deadlines work well to get fence-sitters to finally make the move to purchase your product. Here's a few ways to seal the deal with your deadline:

- Be specific - more specific dates and details lend credibility to your deadline, making it believable.
- Give your special offer a name - May Madness Deal, Black Friday Blowout, Manager's Special, etc. - these can all cement the deal in the customer's mind.
- Use attention-grabbing words like "rush sale", "24 hours only", "hurry", "final chance" etc.
- Put your special offer front and center, showing it's the most important part of the postcard because the offer is just so good.

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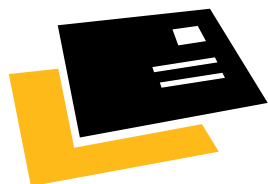
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