

The NextPage Guide to Direct Mail Success



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CHAPTER 1:

5 Secrets to Organizing Your Successful Direct Mail Project

*A successfully executed direct mail campaign can boost your brand's awareness, authority, and most importantly, **your bottom line**. The design and execution of your direct mail campaign can be a challenging and stressful venture. For nearly 30 years, **NextPage** has worked on tens of thousands direct mail campaigns. By creating and implementing these campaigns, we have learned the secrets to generating a successful and profitable result. A successful direct mail campaign begins with organization and planning.*

The various stages of planning, execution and analysis can be overwhelming to both newbies and old pros alike. We have created this resource to help you avoid the pitfalls and perils that have caught so many others unaware.

By organizing these 5 phases and having clear and obtainable expectations at each step, you will be on the path to a successful and profitable direct mail campaign.

1. **Define Goal/Strategy** – What is your goal? Who are you trying to reach and what do you want them to do? What methods will you utilize to reach your goal? What value are you bringing to your recipient? What are you trying to achieve, direct sales, sales leads, or improved customer loyalty? How will you define your ROI?
2. **Budget Considerations** – What are your budgetary constraints? Where do you prioritize your expenditures; lists, design, copy, printing, personalization, postage? Each of these areas will have its own cost concerns and impact on the results. Allocating your budget for each area in advance will reduce surprise expenditures and create realistic goals for ROI.
3. **Define the Audience/List Source** – Who is your target audience? Can you define within your target group for further personalization or segmentation? Will you be using your own list data or buying a list? Have you verified that the list has been scrubbed and updated? Common demographic considerations:

Business to Consumer

- Age Group
- Gender
- Wealth
- Ethnicity
- Lifestyle
- Location

Business to Business

- Business Type
- Consumer Market
- Industry
- Location

4. **Vendor Partner Sourcing** – Depending on the scope and goal of your campaign, you may need to seek additional vendor partners for such tasks as qualified list acquisition, database analysis and segmentation, and IP and email address list services for additional digital views and reinforcement of your message.
5. **Develop Brand Centric Creative – Package Design / Messaging / Graphics** – Summarizing your creative goals into a creative strategy statement is an excellent starting point and will help your creative team know where they are aiming. From here you can further define the type of mailing (postcard, insert, letter) and what types of graphics and imagery will be employed. Define the goal of the copy and make sure your copywriter and designer can collaborate on a shared vision. Having clear and well-communicated branding guidelines will provide direction for the creative process and keep your effort on point.

CHAPTER 2:

Direct Mail Planning Checklist

Here's a checklist you can use to make sure your direct mail campaign is organized for peak performance.

Eight Weeks Prior To Mail Date:

- ☐ Define your target. Select the right segmented list of potential clients, either from your own database or a purchased list
- ☐ Create the message that speaks to this list and find creative elements to complement the message
- ☐ Define the goal of the campaign
- ☐ Create an offer to entice prospects, and include a CTA
- ☐ Determine how you will measure the results of the campaign
- ☐ Find a copywriter and graphic designer
- ☐ Get creative, print production, and mail handling quotes.

Six Weeks Prior To Mail Date:

- ☐ Obtain a postage estimate
- ☐ Finalize your message and offer
- ☐ Continue to work on the creative artwork

Four Weeks Prior To Mail Date:

- ☐ Finalize your print service provider and mail handling partner
- ☐ Incorporate unique codes to determine which list performs best
- ☐ Check to ensure that the message has a personal, but professional tone
- ☐ Verify return address, phone numbers for responses, and website/landing page address
- ☐ Determine if any needed mailing permits
- ☐ Proof spelling and grammar carefully

Two Weeks Before Mail Date:

- ☐ Finalize lists: buy external lists and clean own database
- ☐ Review all lists for errors
- ☐ Make sure names and titles are in correct order
- ☐ Check each listing has a zip code
- ☐ Proofread copy one last time
- ☐ Dial phone numbers listed on the piece
- ☐ Visit websites listed on the piece

CHAPTER 3:

Adding Data to Your Direct Mail Project

*There are a lot of theories about what makes a direct mail piece stand out from the crowd, the copy, the offer, the images, the bold colors or the texture of the paper. Each argument has its merits. The one thing marketers can agree on, however, is what will make your direct mail project **FAIL. Bad Data.***

When it comes to adding data to your project, do not skimp, do not cut corners, and do not take shortcuts. There are three data aspects you need to get spot-on.

1. Understanding Your Target Customer

When you begin defining your ideal customer, you need first to look at who your best customers already are and ask yourself what they have in common with each other. Identifying those commonalities will help you ascertain whether other individuals with similar traits might also be good customers.

Another important place to begin is by looking at whom your competitors target. You may or may not want to overlap them; ask yourself “who are they missing?”

Analyze what your business has to offer and brainstorm on who might benefit from it. Who needs your service/product? What other, similar audience might also benefit?

Once you've compiled the above information, can you extrapolate other data from it? Is there a gender, geographic, ethnic background, education level, age or socio-economic factor that seems to stand out? To go even deeper, look for psychographic similarities. Personality, religion, values, hobbies, lifestyle, and behavior can all help to give a fuller picture of your target.

2. Target Your Ideal Customer

Now that you've defined who your ideal customer is, you need to build a list of potential new leads. Your database may be a great starting point for creating your mailing list. Leads from surveys, social media, content marketing and online form submissions are a great place to start. Making sure this list is clean and current is of absolute importance.

3. Select a Mailing List

Once your ideal customer profile is complete and you've updated and cleaned your database, you should be armed with enough information to decide on whether or not you need to purchase additional data. Knowing whom you are trying to target puts you in an excellent position to consider using an outside source for mailing lists. Several different types of lists exist, specialty lists, custom defined mailing lists, response lists and segmented lists to name a few. According to Direct Marketing News, when considering a company to purchase a list from you should always ask:

- a. **Do you guarantee deliverability?** The company should offer at least 90% deliverability.
- b. **Do you update your lists monthly?** An up-to-date mailing list is critical because people move and this greatly affects mailing list quality.
- c. **Can I use this list more than once?** Some list companies sell the list for one-time use only. If your strategy is to mail to the same prospect pool multiple times, you will want to ask about a multi-use option. Typically, a list is sold for 2-3 times the cost of a single use to allow for multi-use for a period of one year. Keep in mind you are not technically buying the list, you are simply renting it.



CHAPTER 4:

Creating Personalized and Relevant Direct Mail

Direct mail is one of the best marketing opportunities available today. According to an analysis by InfoTrends, Consumers prefer direct mail for receiving marketing and promotional information, and a USPS Household Diary Study says direct mail gets customers' attention; 81% of households read or scan some or all of their advertising mail. Furthermore, direct mail and catalogs outperform other media in building traffic to a website, phone number, store or other business, according to a DMA Response rate Trends Report. Not to mention, even the millennial generation prefers mail.

The effectiveness of a direct mail piece (just like the effectiveness of an email campaign) is measured by the response it generates. Any good direct mail campaign must possess the following:

- A good understanding of the target audience
- An appealing promotional message for the audience
- Eye-catching graphics to grab the reader's attention

Additionally, you will need a strong offer to encourage the reader to take action.

Personalization and Targeting Are Crucial

The more you can define narrow segments and send each one a personalized offer, the more likely your content is to strike a chord and generate a reaction. With the use of predictive modeling and similar techniques you can further optimize your campaigns. You will need to track response rates and use them to refine and keep your list current. If possible, utilize face-to-face and digital touches to verify and update contact information. Personalization should go beyond simply using the recipient's name though that's certainly valuable. Your goal through personalization should be to connect with the recipient. Make sure he or she sees your product or service as a valuable solution to a likely problem. You can achieve this by adding the address and opening hours of the closest or most frequently used store (based on geo-location and shopping habits) or pointing out the sections of a catalog where relevant items might be found (based on displayed behavior or declared interest).

Create Clear, Compelling and Varied Calls to Action

Your content must include simple, relevant, calls-to-action (CTA). Make sure they are compelling to your targeted recipient. Make sure your CTA is clear and actionable. Repetition of the CTA in a concise and visible way is crucial to account for the ‘skimming’ nature of reading. Generate interest in your CTA formatting and bold imagery.

Allow for Personal Choice in Response Method

Offering a variety of ways for the prospect to respond will increase your action rate. You might use pre-paid postcards, coupons, or order forms, that function both digitally as well as in person. Include phone numbers, and as many ways as possible to respond using a mobile phone—QR codes, unique coupon code, or personal URL (PURL) guiding recipients to an offer or enabling readers to take quick action and enable you to track those specific actions.

A postcard is an ideal direct mail piece for this type of fast, reliable and trackable method. Its size is perfect for a sales message and calls to action, yet it doesn't need to be opened for the message to be seen. If sending the reader to a landing page through a QR code or PURL, make sure to engage them by personalizing the content, making your visitor feel like you truly understand their world.

Give Them MORE

It's widely known that recipients will take more time with a piece of physical mail than with an email. This gives you the benefit of offering more pertinent and detailed information. What do they need to know to generate your positive outcome? Create a customer-centric message that concentrates on the benefits the recipient will find valuable. Items to focus on value, convenience, peace of mind, quality, etc., rather than on your offering's features will help you achieve your goals. Consider adding testimonials to increase your overall credibility.

Include these strategies in your direct mail campaign – personalization through copy and imagery on each and every mail piece. Personalized URL's personalized QR's, and clear and actionable CTAs. Create personalized content that conveys your value and authority.



CHAPTER 5:

Integrating Direct Mail and Email

Maximize the effectiveness of your Direct Mail campaign by integrating it with a well-designed, and complimentary timed email marketing strategy. When done properly, you can increase the effectiveness of your campaign by up to 35%.

Stay Recognizable

We mentioned the importance of making sure your mail piece is brand recognizable. When integrating email into the strategy, you have to make sure the branding and messaging is consistent via both channels. Your content voice, color scheme, and fonts should all mirror one another. Increasing your brand identity through multiple touch points increases recognition and authority. The familiarity will make your audience more comfortable with your brand and more likely to take action.

Timing is Everything

During the initial planning stages of your direct mail campaign, you chose specific mailing and ideal delivery dates. Use the same logic to choose when to send out your teaser and follow up emails. Allow your target audience time to read and understand your offer before receiving the next touch. Follow up emails should also be well timed so as to avoid the appearance of spam.

Use Landing Pages

Landing pages are your golden ticket for marrying your direct mail campaign to your digital presence. You can further personalize their visit to your website by creating custom landing pages. This is a very common practice with email marketing but is equally important with direct mail. Cohesive and branded landing pages will blend your online and offline mail pieces, so your target audience feels informed and comfortable with your brand.

The best way to ensure that your prospects see exactly what you want them to see is by creating a well-designed landing page. It allows you to make your sale (offer, special, etc.) the only information available. There are too many distractions on a homepage. Allow your audience to be guided to your desired destination and outcome. Integrate an email collection tool to enhance your database and help you when it comes time to analyze the campaign effectiveness.

CHAPTER 6:

Understanding the ROI

*The one thing marketing professionals all agree on when it comes to the best way to measure marketing success? **There isn't one.** The 'best' way to measure your direct marketing campaign success is not the same for any two clients or companies. The 'best' way to measure your success is to know what your success looks like.*

Here are just a few terms that are frequently tossed about when calculating the **success of a marketing strategy**:

- Customer Acquisition Cost
- Number of Sales
- Customer Lifetime Value
- Return On Investment
- Engagement
- Key Performance Indicator
- Cost per Lead
- Lead Conversion Rate

Having a clear goal in mind for your campaign will help you decide how to judge its performance. Are you trying to:

- Increase brand awareness?
- Drive website traffic?
- Increase the number of sales or increase the total amount sold?
- Increase the revenue per sale?
- Retain existing customers?
- Reach new audiences?

The use of marketing metrics will help you determine how successful you have been in achieving your goal. One of the most frequently used tools is response rate –the number of targets who took the next step in the journey. There are several ways you can track your response rate.

Coupons

Coupons are tried and true when it comes to tracking your response rate. Counting the number of redeemed coupons is an excellent way to track action rate.

Discount or Coupon Codes

Similar to a printed coupon, discount codes can be added to any direct mail piece. The nature of these codes allows them to be used via online ordering where each sale is tracked and counted.

PURLs

Personalized URLs are web addresses created for individual customers or key segments of customers. PURLs allow you to know exactly who is responding to your mailer and lets you track their experience on your website. Tracking their movements will offer you more insight into what is and is not engaging material as well as more insight into their interests.

QR codes

QR codes are an excellent way to track response and collect analytics. You can easily direct your target to a PURL without requiring them to type in the URL. These work exceedingly well when combined with limited time offers.

Customized Landing Pages

Customized landing pages can coordinate with your direct mail strategy and provide additional information to your audience. Adding a data collection form to access special offers or further details gives you an opportunity to collect more data about your target as well as help you track your response rate.

Phone calls

Make sure your business is paying attention to incoming calls. Not everyone reaches directly for the computer to follow up on a mail piece. Some customers still like to pick up the phone and ask for more information. Using trackable phone numbers allows you to know how many phone calls were initiated from a direct mail campaign.

Submission Forms

Adding submission forms on your landing pages is a no-brainer; they give you an opportunity to find out more about your target. A simple contact for allowing them to ask you questions and get more information draws them deeper into the funnel.

Each of these methods allows you to reliably track your response rate and puts you on the path to further understanding and evaluating the effectiveness of your direct marketing strategy. Working with a seasoned direct mail provider is the first step towards increasing both your response rate and your overall ROI. Knowing which methods perform best for your personal campaign goals, in a variety of channels, is a game changer for your marketing strategy.

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If you would like help creating and implementing a direct mail campaign, contact NextPage for complete direct mail services; from database management and personalization to variable data printing and mailing services.

You can contact us here or by calling 800-660-0108.

