5 steps for creating a direct mail campaign that works

The idea that direct mail campaigns are a thing of the past is not only unsubstantiated, but it could also be hindering your marketing efforts.

Granted, you can't simply mail something and expect to see fantastic results. To ensure success with any mailer, best practices must be followed. Below are five steps to follow when gearing up to send a mailed marketing piece.

Step 1: Establish your target

Before we can purchase, source or create a mailing list, we must know who our target market is.

When choosing an area, it's important to be specific and do your research. You might initially say a target of anyone looking to sell a home west of the highway, but be sure to assess all the communities in that area, and check that they fit your target demographic. If there are homes that should receive a different message, leave them out.

For example, if you are sending a message focused on families and there are several 55-and-older communities in the area you've selected, you'll be wasting money by including those communities in your target.

Select your target carefully and double-check that it makes sense. As with all marketing efforts, quality over quantity is key.

5 steps for a successful listing presentation

Prepare, build rapport and careful pricing = success

Step 2: Find your message

What do you want to tell this audience? Do you plan to introduce yourself to a new area? Are you looking to continue to establish dominance in the area?

Regardless of your goal, you will need to create a message that not only resonates but also has the intended impact. Don’t try to have a “one mailer says it all” campaign. By doing so, you’ll risk confusing your audience.

Save different messaging for subsequent pieces within a campaign. A campaign should have a minimum of four drops. Some pieces might include an introduction, market update, interesting history of the community, a closer view into you as a person/agent or an invitation for a personal VIP home evaluation or tour of a house you have on the market.

Step 3: Stand out

Now that you have your message, figure out how you want to deliver it. It doesn’t have to be a postcard. In fact, your target market will be happy to receive something different.

There are many creative things that can be sent via mail, so don’t limit yourself. A postcard might be cheapest, but it is more likely to get thrown in the trash. Get as creative as your budget allows. From tabbed pieces that fold out, to posters and even calendars, feel free to let your creativity flow.

Just remember, the more substantial the piece, the less likely it will end in the trash, and thus the higher the chance you have of truly reaching your target.

Step 4: Don’t stop at one

If your first piece didn’t get the welcome reception you thought it deserved, don’t get discouraged.

It takes more than one piece to get people to come around.

If you stop at one, your campaign has no chance of succeeding. You should continue to send the campaign, but review the first mailers and ensure that there was nothing amiss. At times, mailers may sit in the post office for a bit before getting sent out.

Once the campaign has run its course, you will be able to make changes to improve the effectiveness of the strategy.

Step 5: Rinse and repeat

Now that you've sent out a successful campaign, go ahead and start planning your next. If you wait too long, your target audience is likely to forget you.

Consistency is an essential aspect of marketing, no matter the channel you're using. So, take what you learned from the first campaign, and apply it to the next before you lose momentum.

Don't just simply dismiss direct mail as a costly, ineffective endeavor. If you take the time and invest the money in doing it right, you are likely to see great results.

Everyone likes to receive something unexpected and clever in the mail, and many are likely to share a really unique piece. Follow these steps, and you'll be reaping the benefits of your direct mail campaign in no time.

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