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## Marketing on a Budget: How to Promote for Pennies

**W**hether you are a large or small business; whether your organization is for-profit or non-profit; regardless of what product or service you offer in the marketplace, some part of your regular activities has to include promoting. To be successful, your business or organization must interact with those you intend to serve – your clients, customers, patrons, members, subscribers, donors or users – and must be constantly seeking to attract the attention of those who can benefit from what you offer.

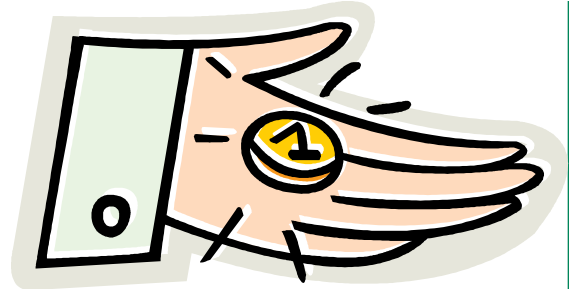
Businesses are comfortable talking about this process as a *selling system* – a way of regularly interacting and connecting with customers and prospects. And though organizations, particularly non profits, may have difficulty seeing their outreach activities as a selling system, it actually fits a broad definition.

People buy from people. People join or give because someone asked. That means that ultimately success comes from people connecting to people. So how can a business or organization set about making a connection, particularly with a stranger? The answer is simple – by regularly engaging in unobtrusive outreach activities.

### Outreach on a budget

There is one outreach activity that is both cost effective and easy – using the post office to deliver your message anywhere for just pennies per delivery. Mail offers several benefits over other outreach techniques:

- **Targeting.** The outreach program can be directed to a specific person that you suspect



will benefit from what you are offering.

- **Measurable results.** The results of the outreach program can be evaluated objectively with actual measurements: number of respondents or inquiries or sales or donations.
- **Flexibility:** Literature and the message can be personalized or tailored to the individual receiving it.
- **Affordable.** Even a modest budget can fund a successful outreach program.

### What to expect from an outreach program

If you haven't yet begun a program of regular, consistent – some might even say *persistent* – outreach, there are a few things you should know so you can tailor your expectations and your budget accordingly.

- **Be consistent and persistent.** Set a schedule for your outreach activity of every month, every six weeks, or every quarter, then stick to it. Remember that your ultimate objective is to get to the *people-to-people* stage. Consistent and persistent outreach helps establish familiarity and recognition of your business or organization. And if you offer more than

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*“... tell your company’s or organization’s story while spotlighting all your products and services...”*

*“Errors that could prevent delivery include...”*

- one product or service, regular outreach will allow you to tell your company’s or organization’s story while spotlighting all your products and services one at a time. Finally, consistent outreach means you’re putting your contact information in the hands of prospects and customers again and again. You aren’t relying on them to remember, keep or find the contact information.
- *Have a strategy for whom to include in your outreach program.* If you’re a business, we think a good strategy is to include a mix of your top customers (the ones who give you 80% of your business) and prospects who share characteristics with your top customers. By including your top customers, you will be reinforcing their decision to buy from you and also reminding them of other products and services you offer that they may need but not be buying from you.
- Note that we don’t recommend mailing to all your customers. For most businesses, sales follow the *Pareto principle* (also known as the 80/20 rule). This principle states that 80% of consequences stem from 20% of causes. Translated to sales, this predicts that 80% of your sales come from 20% of your customers – by definition, your top customers.
- *Make sure what you send represents your company or organization well.* Accuse us of being self-serving, but we would like to remind you that it costs the same to print and mail something that is badly-designed as it does to print and mail something that is well-designed. If you have the tools and time to create your own image pieces, we offer many ways for you to efficiently and quickly transfer files to us for printing. But if you’re using Word or PowerPoint to design a trifold self-mailer, we’d like you to talk to us about our design and layout services.

### Mail list quality

The goal of any outreach program is to motivate people to take action. Since you already have an established relationship with customers, you can predict that they will read and respond to information or offers you send them.

Unless, that is, your mailing list has errors that either prevent delivery or negatively impress your customers or prospects. Errors that could prevent delivery include incomplete or incorrect address information (street address, city, state and ZIP code), while errors that might leave a bad impression on customers include misspelled or incomplete names.

There are several ways errors can be introduced into a mail list:

- *Data entry.* It has been reported that the average error rate for data entry is 10.1%. This means that on average, if a mailing list has 1000 records, 100 of them will have errors introduced during data entry
- *Customer relocation.* Every year, businesses and individuals are on the move, changing their residences or relocating their businesses. Over time, a mail list that is not regularly maintained will degrade in quality.
- *Differences in mail list structures.* If your mailing list is assembled from various sources, errors may be introduced by differences in how the component lists are structured and how information is gathered. For example, one list may capture a spouse name while a second list does not.

### Improving mail list quality

The more complete and accurate the address information in the mail list, the faster the mail will be delivered to the right person. Use these tips to improve the quality of your mail list:

- *Institute and enforce standards for data entry, including standardizing individual address elements.* For more information

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- on addressing, see *Tips and Tricks* in this issue of *Printips*
- *Verify and validate the information in the mail list.* You may be able to verify and validate using an Internet search engine and visiting the web sites of customers and prospects. For those without web sites, telephoning to verify is the best approach.
- *Identify and remove duplicates.* Duplicates may be exact (meaning all elements of the name and address are identical) or near (some elements are similar but not exact – a first name of *Bob* versus a first name of *Robert* is an example). Identifying duplicates can be difficult without specialized software for the task.

*“ Identifying duplicates can be difficult without specialized software for the task.”*

## The Magic of Postcards

One cost-effective way to reach out to your customers and prospects regularly is to mail a post card. Unlike letters and self-mailers, the recipient doesn't have to open anything to see the message, and a post card is easy to store or file.

A popular size for post cards is 5½ x 8½ – half of an 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper. However, there are some other sizes that we like because they are unusual but still can be processed by postal service equipment rather than by hand: 6 x 9 and 6 x 11. A 6 x 9 post card will extend one-half inch above and to the size of a stack of mail, making it more visible. A 6 x 11 post card looks like a giant and attracts attention by its size.

When designing a post card, keep in mind how the mail is presented when delivered. Most

likely, it will be sorted with the address facing the recipient. Be sure you include enough tantalizing information and good design on this side of the post card to ensure that the recipient will turn it over.

Contrary to common usage, the mail panel on a post card does not need to take up the entire right half of one side. An addressing area of 4 ¼ inches wide by 2½ inches high is sufficient for most 3- or 4-lines addresses.

Remember that a poorly designed or positioned mail panel may prevent you from qualifying for the best postage rate. For that reason, we suggest that you have us look at the mail panel before you commit to press. Just call 513-248-2121 for help.



*“ One cost-effective way to reach out to your customers and prospects regularly...”*

**Q.** *What determines response rate?*

**A.** Response rate – the number of contacts initiated by customers or prospects as the result of an outreach program – is broadly influenced by three factors: the mail list, the offer and the appearance of the mail piece. Of these three, the most important is the mail list,

accounting for about 60% of the response. The offer and the mail piece appearance account for about 20% each.

Other factors include the uniqueness of your product or service, its price, whether it is a seasonal product, the image you project, how creatively you engage the reader, and how consistently you mail.

Another important factor is the size of the mailing itself. A response rate of 1% applied to a mailing of 50,000 yields 500 responses. The same response rate applied to a 1000-piece mailing yields 10 responses.



*“... important factor is the size of the mailing...”*

# Address For Success



“... if the delivery address is incorrect or can't be read, then the mail piece won't be delivered.”

**T**he delivery address is the most important information on your mail piece, because if the delivery address is incorrect or can't be read, then the mail piece won't be delivered. Keep these points in mind when addressing:

Put the address elements in this order:

- Name or attention line at the top (and specifically not in the lower corner of the mail panel)
- Company
- Delivery address, including properly spelled street name, directional (N, S, E, W), street type, abbreviated (St., Ave., Blvd., Ln., etc.) and suite, apartment or space number preceded by the number sign (#).
- City, State and ZIP code

Automated mail processing machines read addresses on mail pieces from the bottom up and will first look for a city, state, and ZIP Code. Then the machines look for a delivery address.

If the machines can't find either line, then your mail piece could be delayed or misrouted. Any information below the delivery address line (a logo, a slogan, or an attention line) could confuse the machines and misdirect your mail.

Almost 25% of all mail pieces have something wrong with the address – for example, a missing apartment number or a wrong ZIP Code. Will some of those mail pieces get delivered, in spite of the incorrect address? Yes. But delivery will be delayed and the impact of the outreach may be compromised.

Sometimes it's not important that your mail piece reaches a specific customer, just that it reaches an address. One way to do this is to use a generic title such as *Postal Customer* or *Occupant* or *Resident*, rather than a name, plus the complete address.

Use common sense. If you can't read the address, then automated mail processing equipment can't read the address.

## Words

**Ancillary service endorsement:** instructions in a prescribed form that tells the USPS what to do with mail that is undeliverable as addressed. There are four ancillary services: address service, return service, change service and forward service.

**Aspect ratio:** the dimension of a mail piece expressed as the ratio of the height to the length. Used to determine whether a mail piece fits the definition of *rectangular*. The aspect ratio is calculated by dividing the length of the mail piece by its height. To qualify as rectangular, the aspect ratio must fall between 1:1.3 and 1:2.5.

**Bulk mail:** Term applied to all mailings, regardless of class, that consist of a specified minimum number of pieces prepared and presented in trays or sacks with appropriate Statement of Mailing.

**Delivery point barcode:** A ZIP+4 barcode containing two additional digits that designate a specific delivery point.

**Directional:** An address element. The four directional are north, south, east and west.

**First class mail:** a class of mail and a postage

designation. Among other things, first class mail receives delivery priority and comes with address services. *Card* is a subclass of first class postage.

**Indicia:** plural of *indicium*. The imprinted designation on a mail piece indicating method of postage payment and class of mail.

**OCR read area:** The space on a mail piece reserved for machine-printed address elements. Defined by height, width and distance from the right and bottom of the mail piece.

**Optical character reader:** a computer-controlled piece of equipment that locates, reads and interprets address information contained in the OCR read area; sprays on a barcode, and sorts the mail into a stacker.

**Standard mail:** a class of mail and a postage designation. Formerly known as third class mail; often mistakenly called bulk mail.

**UAA mail:** a mail piece that is undeliverable as addressed.