There are three keys to any successful direct-marketing campaign: targeting the right person; providing that person with a relevant message; and timing. While it is not an exact science, here are four unique solutions you can implement to increase your response rate.

1. Market to prospects that “look like” your best customers. You already know who your best customers are, so go and find more like them. Easier said than done, right? Well, it can be that easy. If you have at least 1,000 “good” customers (anything less than 1,000 typically will not be statistically relevant), just provide that list to a company with customer-profiling software. What you will get back is a detailed report of where your customers are located along with approximately 24 different demographic categories that will show you exactly what your customers “look like.” So, the next time you purchase a mailing list there is no guess work involved—you will know exactly who you need to target.

In addition, this profile can provide you with opportunities that you may have yet to uncover. For example, if you find out there is a significant market of people out there that would finance a new HVAC system, you can craft your message specifically for that group (one of the three keys of direct marketing).

2. Send an aggressive offer to prospects only. You need to have an aggressive offer to bring in new customers. But the dilemma is that you do not want your current customers to see that offer and feel left out.

When you purchase a mailing list, simply provide your current customer list to your list provider and those records will be removed from your mailing.

3. Use variable text. By using variable text on your printed materials you can save money and increase your response rate. Some common variables that can be changed each time a mailing goes out are: the name of a neighborhood you are working in; the type of job you just finished; the offer and its expiration date; a customer’s testimonial; the name and address of a current customer in a specific neighborhood; and more.

When you are able to change the text on a postcard without having to produce a new design each time, you are going to save money.

The added benefit of variable text is that it is personalized every time your mailing goes out. You have little time to catch someone’s eye. Along with some of the variables mentioned above, you should also include the recipient’s first name on every single piece—not just in the address area, but in the body of the main text.

Research shows personal messages may increase response rates by up to 36% and shorten response times by up to 34%. By using variable data, your prospects and customers feel valued when they believe your advertising and marketing is customized just for them. This technology puts the power in your hands to speak to your marketplace one customer at a time.

4. Clean it up. Before you send out your next customer mailing, have it run through a data-hygiene program. People move, die, etc., and you may be sending mail to someone that no longer lives at that address, which can be costly. Cleaning up your customer mailing list will increase both deliverability and response rates.

While the foundation of a good direct-mail campaign has remained consistent over the years, technology has given us the opportunity to make campaigns more effective. So, the next time you develop a direct-mail campaign, use technology to your advantage.

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