

Marketing with Postcards

There is always a conflict between the need to keep in front of your customers and the work and cost that goes into a constant awareness program. The need to balance the cost and benefit has led most companies to conclude that an occasional exposure suffices, even though they know that a more concentrated campaign is more effective. Even when the cost of such a campaign is neutralized (after all there is an ROI equation, so the spend more-earn more equation is visible), the overwhelming effort serves to discourage implementation. The answer to this challenge may just be the postcard.

Why Use Postcards?

The postcard offers a viable solution because it affords a number of advantages while not presenting the counter-balancing disadvantages. Consider the following:

1. **Postcards are All Around Less Expensive** – the designing and printing of postcards is relatively inexpensive as their size allows for lower per-card costs as when compared to larger pieces. Similarly, postcards are less expensive to mail as the per-card postage is lower than other size mailers. Postcards can still be mailed first class, meaning you get the speedy delivery without the associated full cost.
2. **People Read Postcards** – perhaps the most important reason to use a postcard is that it is effective. People do not find postcards to be as intrusive and annoying as junk mail and their open format (no envelope to open) means it is simple to glance. This converts to a significantly higher rate of exposure.
3. **Postcards can be Designed** – the postcard is a relatively flexible format that can feature both graphics and copy and allow for the communication of both message and offer.
4. **Postcards are Easy to Use** – even if you are your own in-house mailing department, postcards are easy because there is not folding or envelope stuffing involved. They need only to be printed, addressed, stamped and sent.

Designing Great Postcards

The design of effective postcards can follow the rules you would adhere to if you were designing an advertisement. You would:

- Begin with a large headline that serves to attract attention and begin to stimulate interest.
- Then you would use a sub-headline, smaller in size, to bridge the transition from the headline to the body of the postcard. In many cases this sub-headline is used to convey an aspect of the offer, so that together with the primary headline, you have communicated both benefit/need and the offer all within the first two lines.
- Then you would present the copy, which expands on both the benefit/need of the product or service you are selling and the offer you are proposing and why this offer is worthy of attention and response.
- Finally you want to make certain that the image you are using serves to reinforce and convey your overall message so that the copy and the image compliment one another and serve to support the overall purpose of the communication.

The designing of a great postcard also includes the way in which the card is produced. It is recommended that you not seek to save a bit of money by opting to use less

expensive paper. People are used to a certain consistency to a postcard and the use of cheap paper will only serve to lessen the perceived value of your campaign and therefore weaken the results it generates. Additionally, you should use full color unless the nature and character of your campaign naturally lends itself to black and white. Keep in mind that the postcard, like all your marketing materials comes to serve as a reflection on your company and the standards it embraces. If you use black and white or thin paper the recipients may conclude that you skimp on other things too, like quality or service. You want to communicate an image and in most cases that image is best transmitted through a quality, full color postcard.

Another cost saving option to avoid is the size of the card. You should not go with the smaller size card, but rather the standard size. The idea that the smaller size will somehow differentiate you from the other cards being sent is merely an effort on your part to find a legitimate marketing justification to go with the cheaper card. You know better. Differentiation is only powerful and worthy of pursuit if the differentiating factor is perceived by the recipient market as an advantage. Using a smaller sized postcard offers no such perception.

The entire purpose of your postcard is to remind your customer base and potential customer base of the outstanding opportunity you provide to either resolve a problem they have or meet a need/desire they have. But, bottom line, your postcard should be designed to drive a sale. To make certain you maximize the chances this will happen always remember to:

- Include information on how you can be contacted (phone number and website).
- Include some sort of special offer (either a discount or other incentive) that is unique to the card. This will serve as a call to action, create a sense of urgency, and also allow you to track the card's efficacy.
- Include a call to action. Remember people are overwhelmed by the marketing communications thrown at them daily. Your message needs to inform them that your postcard is not only for informational purposes, but requires an action on their part (such as making a call or visiting a website or location).

Most businesses overlook the postcard as a tool for communications because they see its size as being inconsistent with the volume they deem needed to blast through all the marketing noise competing for someone's attention. But just as the old commercial used to say, sometimes when you want someone's attention a whisper is more effective than a shout. The fact that postcards are non-intrusive and can be viewed with no effort makes them a whisper that can turn into a shout. Now all you have to do is make certain you're quietly shouting at the right market.