

Ray Jutkins

Direct Mail - Truth with Words

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ABSTRACT

Considering the common use of Direct Mail marketing, it's amazing that more people haven't considered what makes for good copy and formatting on Direct Mail sales letters. Here are a whole bunch of proven tips on how to create better Direct Mail letters.

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"Direct Mail - Truth with Words"

Direct Mail has been, is, and will continue to be a strong business marketing tool.

Why? Because it works! It carries a message, answers questions and gets response.

And it works because it is personal. Direct Mail works because it is "conversation in writing." It works because, no matter what you have heard, read or believe...most people look forward to receiving and reading their mail. People like being treated as an individual...as a person.

So, if Direct Mail is so powerful, how can we as marketers use it effectively? To keep the business we have...to find new business?

Here are a few "Truths with Words," to make your Direct Mail work for you;

4our Things People Do With Your Mail

Most everyone looks at his mail every day. When he looks at your Direct Mail, he will do one of these **4** things:

- * read it immediately...because he perceives it to be important, even urgent, certainly interesting,
- * stack it (with all his other reading matter) to read at night or over a week-end,
- * pass it along to another - he decides it is not for him and share it with someone else, or
- * trash it - yes, throw your mail away!

What is most interesting is your reader will make one of these 4 decisions in 2 or 3 seconds! per piece of mail. Just like you do.

5ive Ways You Can Use Direct Mail

You can use Direct Mail to help you market each of these **5** ways:

- . . .to get new business - something everyone needs to do sooner or later,
- . . .keep the business you already have, with frequent "soft" and "hard" contacts,
- . . .to upgrade your customer to another level of your service or product,
- . . .to cross sell additional products and service, and
- . . .to keep 'em coming back for more - even if you can't upgrade / cross-sell, you retain your current customer at the same level.

6ix "Musts" For Your Direct Mail to Work

These 6 ideas are not optional. For your Direct Mail to give you maximum results, these are truly "musts":

- * design your mail to be noticed, noticed amongst all the other mail,
- * think about getting your mail opened, seeing it, noticing it, does not get it opened,
- * make your writing readable with words your audience will read with confidence,
- * so your message is totally understandable,
- * always have a unique or different offer, something of additional benefit and value, and
- * be certain to Ask For The Order - be clear you do bring something your audience needs...and you do want to do business.

7even X 2...Key Words To Make Your Direct Mail Work Better

Direct Mail is a "read" medium. Words are key. Here are 7 X 2 words and phrases to improve your Direct Mail - words that get results:

- * the first 7...You...New...Now...Win...Buy...Today...FREE.
- * and the next 7...YES...Save...Guarantee...Learn...Easy...Find Out...Send For.

Use these words and your Direct Mail will work better.

8ight - When Does Direct Mail Work Best? - 8ight Ideas

- 1). When you can clearly identify your audience Direct Mail will work. If you are not able to target your marketplace, it is much less likely to work.
- 2). When you can cleanly reach your target audience. Identifying them is first - reaching them with your message is another process.
- 3). When you have a lot to say. When your message is long, complex, compound, different, unique...new, mail works.
- 4). When your service / product has continuity, repeat or follow-on sales. i.e., when it must be bought over and over, again and again.
- 5). When you need to control the entire selling process. You don't want others between you and the decision maker.
- 6). When you need to build a "model" that can be repeated by others. You set the standards, and introduce your model for others to use.
- 7). When other distribution channels don't work as well

as going direct to your audience.

- 8). When you need less visibility in the marketplace - Direct Mail is wonderful. You send it only to your select few. Mail is perfect for segmenting your market.

9ine Ways to Make Your Envelopes Work Better in Direct Mail

- 1). "Tease" your audience by beginning your message on your envelope. Start by leading with your very best offer.
- 2). "Show and Tell" with graphics. We are in a graphic world. Use pictures, charts, graphs, and "things" to get attention, beginning with your envelope.
- 3). Try shock and surprise! Something different. Unique. Unusual. Be who you are, stay in character. Yet, do not be like everyone else.
- 4). Use people on your envelope. People make buying decisions - not companies or associations. Use pictures of people.
- 5). Talk benefits. Benefits to your audience. People do not buy red buttons...they buy what happens when you PUSH red buttons. Give your audience buttons to push. Benefits.
- 6). Begin on the outside of your Direct Mail package with facts and figures and numbers. Specifics. They get attention. And will draw your reader in.
- 7). Use photography. Photos are more believable than illustrations.
- 8). Use windows on your envelope. Windows with "things" showing through. Windows on the front...AND the back!
- 9). In any case, do use the back of the envelope. Why? Because 3 of 4 people will turn your envelope over before they open it. Use the back of your envelope.

9 ways to make your envelope work better for you.

10en P.S. & P.P.S. Ideas

79% of your first time readers - almost 4 out of 5 - will read the P.S. in your letter first!

Before they read your letter.

What does this say? It says you had better! have a P.S.

Okay, what should your P.S. say...and how should it say it?

The P.S. is a repeat of earlier key benefits, opportunities, offers, how to respond.

What IS in your P.S.? Here are 10 ideas of things to consider and include in your P.S:

- 1). Write your P.S. either "soft", or "hard." Your words either suggest your reader think or do, or they tell more exactly what to do. And how and when and where and why to do it. "Soft,"... or "hard" - whichever works for you.
- 2). Remind your audience of the special premium or gift they'll earn by responding.
- 3). Emphasize your product / service guarantee. And your "Absolute Guarantee of Satisfaction."
- 4). Talk about what they'll earn, or make, or save by doing business with you.
- 5). Repeat the service / product benefits - list the features and the corresponding 2 or 3 key benefits you offer.
- 6). Repeat how to contact you. Your phone numbers, fax numbers, E-mail address, business address - make yourself convenient to do business with.
- 7). Have a **Limited Time Offer** or a **Limited Number Offer**. Dates get people to act. Numbers get attention. "Limits" urge action - make a LTO or LNO.
- 8). Reinforce your offer by including a graphic in your P.S. Or a testimonial from a good customer. Anything to restate your strong message.
- 9). Summarize your sales message in 2 or 3 lines. Condense your entire letter to a single, short paragraph. Put **KISS** (**Keep It Short & Simple**) to work in your P.S.
- 10). Repeat your call to action. "One last time" **Ask For The Order**. Remind your reader you DO want to do business with them.

10 ideas to make the **P.S.** work for you.

11even Direct Mail Ideas That Work

- * Indent the first line of every paragraph..it "pulls" a reader into your copy.
- * Use quotations - they get attention.
- * Use testimonials - they make you believable.
- * Tell a case history story - they prove you do what you say you do.
- * Use real numbers...people like facts and figures, they "follow" numbers.
- * Include a Q&A section...Questions & Answers share with your marketplace points you know are important to them.
- * Underline short bursts of copy...use a very small amount of CAPS...or a very wee bit of *Italics*,

and not much more **bold** - each will help you emphasize your key message points. Especially when it is not over done. And, they keep the reader with you.

- * This is a world of color. Today's marketplace has seen color for a lifetime. Use color in your Direct Mail. Everything! should be at least 2 colors. Your audience expects color. Fulfill their expectations.
- * And use symbols, too. "Signs" such as # for number, % for percentage, + for plus and = for equals, the \$ dollar sign, * asterisk such as with this list, \ or / slash marks all get attention. Use them in your Direct Mail.
- * Write like you say it. Do not worry about grammar. Don't concern yourself with exact punctuation. It is not necessary to word-smith every sentence. Be "good"...and make it human, too.
- * Direct Mail is a "personal" marketing tool. So, be as personal as possible. Use your reader's name. It let's them know you took the time to care. And, when you can't use a name, be "creative" with your salutation. "Dear Marketing Enthusiast" works, too.

11 ideas that will help your Direct Mail be more powerful.

12welve Ways To Get More Response

Always **Ask For The Order**.

Make certain your readers know you want to do business with them.

Now!

Here are **12** things to do on your order form, reply card, response device, application or coupon to make certain your response is the max possible:

- ... Tell your reader exactly what you want them to do. Make your directions crystal clear about the steps to take.
- ... Make it easy to respond - easy to do business with you. Offer options on how to respond - including listing your phone, fax and E-mail address on your response form.
- ... Make the most powerful offer possible - and repeat it on your response device. Maybe with a graphic to support the offer message.
- ... Use bold graphics to get attention. Get away from boring... spruce up the response area of your Direct Mail - make it look interesting and attractive, too.
- ... Write clear, clean, crisp and concise copy for your reply. Make your response message perfectly clear.
- ... Get your audience "involved" - use action devices. Rub-offs, stickers, perforations, scratch and sniff, unusual folds, pieces of puzzle - anything to get people "playing"

with your reply.

- ... Give your readers plenty of room to write. Make your response device BIG. With large spaces to fill in the blanks, to complete the action. Make certain your response is inviting and friendly to use.
- ... Include your corporate name, logo, phone, fax, E-mail and "snail-mail" address - all contact data - on your reply device, too. Be easy to find.
- ... Offer a strong guarantee. A Guarantee in Direct Mail is not an option - it is mandatory. Your readers expect at a minimum a "Guarantee of Satisfaction." Make yours strong.
- ... Repeat your **Limited Time** or **Limited Number Offer**. Dates and numbers on your reply device will increase the action you enjoy.
- ... Include 2 or 3 or more response card options in your Direct Mail package. If 1 works, why not 2? It allows your customer or prospect to reply a second time.
- ... and Always **A.F.T.O.** - **Ask For The Order**. Make it clear to your reader you do want to do business with them. And do it more than once, too.

12 ways to make your response device work for you.

13irteen Summary Tips About Direct Mail

If you are going to remember only a small part of this article - this is the part to remember.

This checklist will help you make certain your Direct Mail has every chance of outstanding success:

- 1). Look at your Direct Mail as your recipient will look at it. Pretend you are they.
- 2). Remember your primary objective. What do YOU want your prospect, your customer to do?
- 3). Do your #1., #2. and #3. benefits "hit" your reader right between the eyes? Make sure they do!
- 4). Does your Direct Mail package "flow"? Does it look like it all goes together? Like it was planned?
- 5). Does your package encourage your reader to open it NOW? At once? Immediately? Before they do another thing?
- 6). Do you see the letter first? Since 2/3rds of your audience, if they are interested in what you offer, will make a decision based on your letter - make certain your letter is in the envelope where it is easily found.
- 7). Does your letter address the needs of the prospect, the customer? Is it written with the reader in mind? If there are no needs, there will be no sale. Make certain you address your readers' needs.
- 8). Does your brochure "demonstrate" the benefits of doing business with you? With pictures, illustrations, charts and graphs - do you tell your complete story?

- 9). Do the graphics through-out your Direct Mail package support the copy? Do they make the copy more readable? Do they make it better? As television "improves" the script from radio, so Direct Mail graphics must make the copy better.
- 10). Does your reply device include a summary of your full story? Does your card, fax-back form, application, sign-up sheet, coupon say everything? So your reader knows what they are suppose to do next?
- 11). Have you made your very best offer? Do you have a reason for your reader to reply...now!? And is it pointedly clear?
- 12). Is it easy to reply now? The easier you make it the more likely you are to gain a response. Give options on how to respond: phone, fax, E-mail, walk-in, drive-through, computer, mail it...every possible option.
- and 13). If YOU are the recipient mentioned in #1 of this list...what would YOU do with your Direct Mail? Would you respond? If so, why? If not, why not?

13 points for you to think about as you put your Direct Mail program together.

"Truth with Words" - 85 Direct Mail ideas to make your mail marketing work better.

Try 'em.

And...happy marketing.