

# COMMON MISTAKES OF DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGNS



*Avoid These Common Blunders to Ensure a Good Response*

**When done correctly, direct mail is highly effective. Use these points to help you develop and implement more effective direct mail campaigns, while avoiding the most common errors.**

## **“Call to action” is missing or hard to find**

Once you’ve succeeded in getting a customer or prospect reading your direct mail piece, you’ve got to tell them what steps they should take next to accept or further investigate your offer. Put these Calls to Action at logical places within the promotion (for example, toward the top and also at the bottom of a letter). Make it EASY for them to use or take the next step.

## **Forgetting to test**

Direct mail marketing is the art of continual improvement. Try different approaches in design, offer, and packaging. Eventually you’ll find a combination that is really strong, which is called the “control.” Then you can test promotions against your control, altering variables such as the offer, or the design, or the entire promotion versus a whole new approach.

## **Too much hype**

Practice the art of generating excitement without hype. Buyers are savvy these days. Your first task is to establish trust — hype simply undermines this.

## **Bad grammar**

Yes, the whole world is free styling with text message language right now. But don’t allow your direct mail marketing to succumb to lazy writing. Remember, you’re a business. Buyers are looking for attention to detail in the products and services they choose.

## **Boring/Bad/No headline or teaser (aka ‘Get It Opened!’)**

If the headline doesn’t catch their attention, it doesn’t matter how good the rest of the copy is. People typically decide to continue reading based off interest in the headline or teaser.

## **Cluttered design**

If you feel like you’re short on space to state what you want to say, you probably are. Consider a larger mail format or better yet, simplify your message. If you try and say too much the message will get lost entirely, because people don’t want to spend their time looking at a cluttered design (just as they don’t like to spend time in a cluttered room).

## **Not direct enough**

Your direct mail marketing piece should be designed for your audience to take action. Be specific. Valuable offers with a time constraint are a great way to get a prospect to contact you.

## **Bad copywriting**

Typos and rushed writing reflect poorly on your company, just as if you never mowed the lawn in front of your office. Professional copy and design are expenses that generally pay for themselves in the form of increased response.

### **Targeting not on target**

Do you really know your customers? When is the last time you did a customer survey to learn what motivates them? Also, consider utilizing your current customer list to create a data model. This will give you a clear picture of your customer base. Knowing your customers and prospects well makes all the difference in direct marketing success.

### **Going cheap on the postage**

Sometimes it makes more sense to pay a little more. If it doesn't get there at the right time, the whole effort could go to waste, or at least valuable days of revenue could be lost.

### **Lacking creativity**

The direct mail landscape is crowded. Creativity is how you get noticed. Remember, a strategically creative idea/offer, delivered to a relevant audience, boosts response and increases sales.

### **Not integrating with other marketing channels**

Do not miss opportunities to tie direct marketing in with other campaigns. For example, other organizations have become successful at integrating direct mail with email campaigns and PURLs, boosting response dramatically. Your web presence is often integral to your business, so why not use direct mail marketing to drive traffic there?

### **Botched Contests**

Contests are a great way to get interaction with your customers. But if the contest isn't executed smoothly, it can hurt your company's reputation. Don't rush into it. Contests are best with good planning.

### **Lack of branding**

Establish and build your brand identity so that you don't have to introduce yourself with every new marketing initiative. Branding creates recognition, and recognition is a form of trust.

### **One hit wonder mentality**

If you're going to send just one direct mail piece and expect huge results, you'd better hire the best marketing team you can find, because that's a major challenge. Direct mail marketing is an ongoing effort that pays off with time — both in the way of prospect familiarity and in the improvements you make with each mailing.

### **An unreliable printer**

A bad printer can ruin your careful plans and hurt the response of the mailer. A good printer will suggest the right options based on your goals, not on price markups. A good printer may also be able to offer you strategy and insight where you lack experience.

### **Not having a plan**

Have a plan in place so that your direct mail marketing becomes strategic. It can be as simple as writing key dates on a calendar and a list of what components are required. But put something on paper and map the basic steps of the campaign.

### **No follow-up plan**

Congratulations. You've just finished your direct mail campaign. Now what? Most experts suggest multiple "touches" in the coming weeks and months — people don't always act right away. The first touch is often just getting you on their radar screen. Integrate the follow-up with other channels. Many business-to-business marketers choose multiple channels — a mailing along with an email, and then a follow-up phone call and then another mail touch...and so on.

### **Underestimating the importance of the mail list**

You may have the most life-changing offer in the world with the best design ever created. But if it is sent to the wrong person, it's all for nothing. You want to be marketing to the right people, or at least the ones that are more likely to buy from you. This is where using the right demographics and data modeling can be invaluable. And if you think you know your clients, you might be surprised at what your ideal or best clients have in common. The only way you know is by testing and data modeling.

### **Wrong size**

A mailing that is too small will look cramped; too big can be overkill. Even these considerations are secondary — the best approach is giving your offer or message the space it needs to be effective. This means giving your copywriter and designer some freedom to choose the mailer size. Keep in mind though that sometimes bigger is better; larger pieces will stand out from the rest.

### **Taking all the fun out of it**

If you have an exciting new idea for a mailer, nurture that enthusiasm and go for it on a small test sample. Remember, regardless of response, you're almost always going to learn something with each mailing. So go ahead and swing for the fences now and then. More often than not, you will be surprised by the results.

### **A little bit about us...**

We help customers attract, serve and retain clients via the print, mail & digital mediums. For almost 60 years our clients, distributors and re-seller partners throughout North America have trusted us to produce a wide variety of marketing, mail and transactional communications. Please drop us a line or give us a shout... [info@margraphics.com](mailto:info@margraphics.com) or 800-851-4460