

Alternative

Is there an almost FREE contest hiding on your Web site?

New way to market your business

Fast, low-cost way to distribute brochures

Hit the real-estate offices

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Is there an almost FREE contest hiding on your Web site?

Whether they're rich, poor, young, or old, people love the chance to win stuff.

Philadelphia talk-show host Michael Smerconish launched a brilliant yet simple contest to promote his Web site <http://www.mastalk.com> :

"Visit my Web site and if you're visitor number 300,000 ... print out the page, send it to me, and I'll send you a special prize!"

I got hooked. When I got back to my office, I checked out his site for the first time. I was visitor 300,006.

Before I realized it, I surfed his site for over 45 minutes. That's a ton of time when you consider the average person surfs a new site in single-digit minutes.

Can you do the same? Of course.

If you don't have a stat counter for your site, consider 123Count www.123count.com ... try it FREE for 30 days.

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New way to market your business

Imagine you're on a United Airlines flight to Chicago. The captain has turned off the seatbelt sign. As you cruise along, you decide to slip on your headphones for some tunes.

Then the music stops — and the In-Flight Entertainment Network, Inc. plays your commercial.

Now you can tell your story and promote your business on flights all around the country.

Contact In-Flight Entertainment Network, Inc. at LizOnAir@aol.com for more details.

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Fast, low-cost way to distribute brochures

Peg Luksik, independent candidate for governor in Pennsylvania, bulk-shipped brochures to block captains, who then passed them out to their neighbors.

4

Hit the real-estate offices

Do you market to real-estate agents?

Here's a great, low-cost way to advertise.

Most real-estate offices have slotted mail holders for distributing mail and phone messages to the agents. Usually, they'll let advertisers distribute flyers there, free of charge.

This is a great idea for mortgage, title, and insurance companies, as well as food-delivery services.

Courier companies can deliver your flyer to dozens of offices for a small fee (possibly as low as around 4 cents each.) That's probably less than what it would cost you to do it yourself.

If you want to find a courier company in your area that offers this service, ask any Realtor®.

Bundling

Great low-cost giveaway

Bundle your products

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Great low-cost giveaway

Having trouble selling your products?

Why not give away a premium to boost sales?

This is called “packaging” or “bundling,” and it’s a great way to increase sales without discounting.

One idea I thought of was to visit an online bookstore (I chose <http://www.amazon.com>) and search for titles that fit your industry.

For example, if I sold fabrics, I’d look for how-to books that use fabrics.

I chose the keyword “crafts.” In less than 3 seconds, I had a listing of 16,255 titles.

Next, I chose 5 or 10 books, contacted the publishers, and asked for a discount on a bulk purchase of at least 50 books.

It’s not uncommon to buy fifty \$10.00 books for \$2 each.

Then I’d buy the lowest-priced, best-titled book to bundle with a significant purchase.

For example:

***“Buy 10 yards of premium fabric
and get ‘175 Easy-To-Make
Christmas Gifts’ FREE —
a \$10.00 value (yours to keep)”***

Watch this: If 10 yards of premium fabric retail at \$100.00, and that book costs you \$2, that's a "discount" of only 2%. That's much more profitable than the normal 15% to 35% discount you'd normally give to move a product!

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Bundle your products

Bundling is the best way to avoid the “you’re too expensive” objection.

One toothpaste company was experiencing sluggish sales. So they bundled the toothpaste with a toothbrush, dental floss, and mouthwash, in a travel kit.

The price of the package was less than the total of the prices for the individual items.

Sales skyrocketed.

McDonald’s does this with their Extra Value Meals — sandwich, fries, and drink, for one low price.

Computer companies offer packages regularly.

For example:

“Buy a computer — get a free keyboard, mouse, and modem, and \$1,000.00 worth of software.”

Copywriting

How to create compelling offers that no sane prospect could refuse

“But” vs. “however”

Product vs. service

Avoid common brochure mistakes

Keep it simple

How to create compelling offers that no sane prospect could refuse

Remember the movie “The Godfather”?

Don Corleone says, “I’m gonna make him an offer he can’t refuse.” Well, this simple concept is the backbone of any successful sales proposition.

Copywriter Yanik Silver reveals 3 great ways to create an irresistible offer:

Using the bonus pile-on

The famous Ginsu knife infomercials stacked on bonus after bonus until the TV viewer had to place an order. It made you think about how much value you were getting for such a low price. That’s the power of the “bonus pile-on.”

Make prospects take action now!

A lot of people are procrastinators. That’s why it’s important to announce a deadline or scarcity factor to make prospects take action now. If your prospects believe an offer will be around forever, there’s no reason to act on it now.

100% no-risk guarantee

Finally, make your deal as risk-free as possible. Nobody wants to make a mistake and be stuck with something that doesn’t deliver as promised. Lift the risk from the prospect and place it squarely on your shoulders. Make a bold guarantee and make it for as long as possible.

If you want to see an example of how Yanik creates an

irresistible offer for his new Instant Sales Letters, visit his site at:

www.instantsalesletters.com

In less than 3 minutes you can create a winning letter guaranteed to sell your product or service ... without writing! Yanik's fill-in-the-blank sales letters are really easy to use — check it out.

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“But” vs. “however”

The way you use the words “but” and “however” can make a big difference.

The word “but” usually precedes a negative thought:
“You’re really nice **BUT**
you’re no fun.”

People block out the compliment because they’re ready for the letdown.

“However” is a gentler transitional word:

“You’re doing great; **HOWEVER**,
I’d like to see improvement
in your backhand.”

Rule of thumb: Use “but” when you debate:

“Yes, a new state lottery
will bring millions into
our state’s bank account, **BUT**
it’s morally wrong.”

Use “however” when you want the entire point to be remembered:

“Your grades are good; **HOWEVER**,
I’d like to see your SAT score improve.”

Product vs. service

Here's a quick fact: It's easier to distinguish your business from a service aspect than from a product aspect.

For example, if you sell telephone headsets, perhaps you can distinguish your product by saying it has a mute button, comes in 5 colors, and is lightweight.

But from a service aspect, you can offer these benefits:

- In stock or it's FREE
- We never close
- 4-hour guaranteed repair
- Trade up when you outgrow your system
- Order 24 hours a day
- Choose from 100 different systems
- Same-day shipping — only \$15
- Order by midnight and get same-day shipping
- Prepayment discounts
- FREE technical support
- Toll-free ordering hotline
- Priority-member ordering hotline
- Order over the Web from your own computer
- Money-back guarantee
- Saves you at least \$10,000.00 a year in productivity or your money back
- FREE report with any purchase
- No minimums
- Guaranteed everyday low prices
- Business leasing — \$0 down payment
- Expert sales consultants
- And much, much more

Avoid common brochure mistakes

Do you make these common mistakes when you create a company brochure?

- Not using a headline, graphic, or photo to draw the reader into the rest of the brochure
- Too much text, not enough benefits (bullet points)
- Not including a partial client list with brief testimonials
- Too much jargon (industry-speak)
- Using old or dated information
- Not including all contact info (address, phone, e-mail address, URL, etc.)
- Not complying with postal regulations

Keep it simple

I'm often asked whether you should talk up or down to advertising recipients.

My rule of thumb is to assume nothing and write the way I speak. And since I dropped out of college, my vocabulary is limited. That's an advantage when writing copy.

Avoid industry jargon. I give my ads the "mom test": If my mom doesn't know what a PostNet bar code is, my customers might not, either.

Aim for 8 to 15 words per sentence. Long sentences make content harder to understand. I measure by averaging the words per sentence (most word-processing programs can calculate this automatically.)

For examples of easy-to-understand writing, pick up a copy of USA TODAY — they're the masters of simple-speak.

Cost savings

Ask suppliers for discounts

Ask suppliers for discounts

If you don't ask, you probably won't get.

Ask your suppliers how you can save money without sacrificing quality.

- Some will give a discount just for asking.
- Some will give a discount for paying up front.
- Some will give a discount for allowing more time.
- Some will give a discount because they have a quota to meet.
- Some will give a discount because they don't like their boss.

Bonus tip: Ask if there's an outdated product for sale.

A friend of mine got a 10-month-old copy of "SRDS" (a catalog of mailing lists available for sale) at an outrageously low price. Why? Because he asked. He didn't need the current version, and the book was going to be recycled anyway. So the publisher almost gave it away.

Design

New way to number pages

How to format account numbers

Give your layout the “fax test”

Spell out the entire Web address

How to choose paper for letters and flyers

Use curly quotes

How to write telephone numbers

Put commas and periods within quotes

New way to number pages

Ever notice how most books are numbered?

Usually, each page shows the page number (even-numbered pages on the left, odd on the right.)

But chapter numbers are printed only once (at the beginning of each chapter) and can be hard to find.

Solution: Incorporate chapter numbers into the page numbers. Example:

“10-72” translates to chapter 10, page 72.

How to format account numbers

Does your business issue account numbers?

Here's a simple way to make the numbers easier to read and remember:

Add a hyphen or a space every 3 or 4 characters.

For example:

1557-4987-4
is easier to read than

155749874

Credit-card companies do this.

Why?

Because it's easier to deal with numbers in chunks than in long strings.

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Give your layout the “fax test”

I highly recommend you run a copy of your next ad, postcard, or sale flyer through your fax machine.

Why? A fax machine helps show you what a layout will look like to a person with less than 20/20 vision.

If type is too small, it becomes illegible, and graphics with low contrast become muddy.

Also, text or graphics that come too close to the edge of the paper are cut off. It's important to correct that, because the print shop needs a clear margin of at least 1/4" to properly print your promo.

You know you have a graphically correct document if the fax copy is clearly readable.

Spell out the entire Web address

Sarah Stambler, editor of "Marketing with Technology News," suggests that when you mention a Web address in an e-mail message, you include the "http://" before the address:

(example: <http://www.companyname.com>.)

Most e-mail software will recognize the address as a hyperlink and automatically take you to the site when you click on the address. But with some e-mail software, that won't work if you don't include the "http://".

How to choose paper for letters and flyers

Printing a 2-sided letter or flyer?

Specify paper that won't show through.

Standard copy paper is appropriate for single-sided copies. But when you print double-sided copies, use 24- or 60-lb. paper.

Use curly quotes

Always use “curly” quotation marks in your printed documents — they’re easier to read than straight quotes.

Your software probably has a Preferences (or Options) command that will let you turn on the curly-quotes function.

NOTE: I don’t recommend using curly quotes for e-mail and other electronic documents. Most e-mail software can’t handle special characters, and the curly quotes might be replaced by strange characters.

How to write telephone numbers

Should you write telephone numbers with parentheses, hyphens, slashes, or periods?

While no official standard exists, I've developed some guidelines:

Always include the area code

This is a visual cue that says, "Hey there! Here's the phone number you're scanning this advertisement for."

Also, good news travels from coast to coast. When readers tell their out-of-state friends about you, they'll need to include the area code.

One more thought. We're running out of numbers — and phone companies are adding area codes within the same geographic areas. In fact, a house with two or more phone numbers might have different area codes.

When to use hyphens

Use hyphens when the number is surrounded by parentheses within a body of text.

For example:

"Contact PostcardPower (it's a FREE call at 800-411-6256) for more information about saving 31 percent (or more) the next time you mail postcards."

Periods, symbols, or bullets

Many graphic designers use periods, symbols, or bullets on fancy business stationery. I don't recommend this for most applications.

Slashes are for data entry

One slash is faster to type than two parentheses. And speed is crucial in data entry.

Example: 215/893-4884.

Also, when you fax a flyer to your clients, and you outsource the faxing to a service bureau, it helps if your data is in a consistent format.

The safe bet: parentheses

Most of the time, put the area code in parentheses.

Put commas and periods within quotes

When you're communicating within the U.S., place commas and periods inside closing quotes, regardless of context. (There are only a few exceptions — and they're so rare, you probably won't have to worry about them.)

Place colons, exclamation points, question marks, and semicolons outside unless they're actually part of the quoted material.

Guarantees

How's this for a guarantee?

Extend your guarantee

How's this for a guarantee?

Planet Ocean Communications backs up their book sales with their "Dog Ate It" Guarantee®.

They offer you 6 full months to read their book and apply it. Then ...

"If you decide that the value of our service does not far exceed the price you paid, then tell us — and you'll receive a complete and courteous refund within 24 hours after your request.

"There's no need to explain. Just tell us 'The Dog Ate It' and we'll credit your charge card — or write you a check — the very same business day ...

"In any case, you are the final judge and we promise to respect your decision ... no questions asked!"

Now, that's powerful!

Extend your guarantee

One of my top 10 ways to increase sales is to extend your money-back guarantee.

Instead of offering the usual 30-day guarantee, offer a 60-day, 90-day, or lifetime guarantee.

When you buy a tool from Sears, you can return it anytime — no time limits.

Why would Sears do this? Because they know most people who return items do so within the first 30 days. You add more appeal — with very little additional risk — by offering a guarantee for life.

Headlines

Keep headlines short

The headline: The most important sentence

Add quotation marks to headlines

Avoid “!”

How to format numbers

Keep headlines short

A great rule of thumb is 11 words or less.

Any more, and your reader might lose interest.

The headline: The most important sentence

How important are headlines?

Studies show you have less than five seconds to impress a reader with your promo.

And the first thing seen is your headline (at least, it should be.)

If your headline is weak, your promo probably won't get read.

Headlines can increase response by as much as 2,100%. They can make or break your campaign.

Think about your daily newspaper — the headlines pull you into the rest of the story. That's their job.

Add quotation marks to headlines

Put your headlines in quotation marks and watch your response increase.

In fact, some say they see response increase by 27% or even more.

A headline in quotation marks seems less like an impersonal advertisement and more like a personal comment — as if the company owner is talking directly to you.

For example:

“You can save 32% on your homeowner’s insurance”

Avoid “!”

Don't use exclamation points in headlines.

“Dow Jones gains
1,000 points in
record session!”

An exclamation point makes the reader pause. Instead, the headline should lead the reader into the rest of the body copy.

How to format numbers

Which is more? \$1000 or \$1,000.00?

At first, you said the second number, right?

But look carefully. They're both the same number. The second number looks higher in value because it has a comma, a decimal point, and two trailing zeros.

If you want the price of something to seem inexpensive, avoid extra characters such as commas, decimal points, and extra zeros:

“Get a 2-year subscription — only \$49”

When you're demonstrating a savings, you want the opposite:

“Buy one and get one FREE — a \$100.00 value”

Rule of thumb: If you're giving something, add the zeros. If you're taking something away, omit the zeros.

Mailing lists

Never mail without verifying

Accurate mailing lists

How to analyze a list data card

Never mail without verifying

Would you believe most people who rent mailing lists don't verify them before they mail?

For those of you who aren't familiar with renting lists, here's how it usually works:

- You're planning a direct-mail campaign. But you don't have your own in-house mailing list. So you rent one from a list company.

(Note: I strongly recommend using an in-house list whenever possible. A list of your existing customers is usually much more effective than a rented list.)

- In order to obtain the best postal discounts, you outsource the mailing to a lettershop. With state-of-the-art equipment and technology, they can process your postcard campaign faster and less expensively than you could if you mailed it yourself.

- The list company sends the list directly to the lettershop. You never actually see the list.

Sounds like an effective process, right?

Right — unless the list company accidentally sends the wrong list.

For example, a nonprofit organization in Pennsylvania rented a list of previous donors of a noncompeting organization. Response: zero. Why? The list company accidentally sent a list of donors in California.

How can you prevent this?

Invest an extra \$15 and have the list company overnight a “dump” (a hard copy of the first 50 names) to you before you mail.

Accurate mailing lists

The accuracy of most mailing lists is heavily dependent on the efforts of the recipients.

In other words, when people move, it's up to them to fill out a change-of-address card.

According to mailing-list compilers, mailing lists of wealthy people are generally more accurate than lists of low-income people. Low-income people are less likely to fill out postal change-of-address forms.

How to analyze a list data card

Thinking about renting a mailing list?

Be sure to study the list data card first.

A list data card is simply a detailed description of a particular mailing list, to help mailers determine which list is right for each promotion. (And it isn't really a "card" — usually, it's just a sheet of paper.)

Here are some factors to consider about a list:

Demographics

Find out who these prospects really are. Do they match your existing customers' profiles?

Hotline names

"Hotline names" are names of people who have recently responded to a mailing. This lets you know how fresh the data is. Studies show recent buyers are likely to buy again (when the right offer comes along.) Caution: Beware of a July data card indicating 150,000 buyers of skis.

Cost

Is \$25 per thousand names expensive? Probably, if the list is old and untargeted. On the other hand, \$1,000 per thousand names would be worth it if the list produced profitable results.

Miscellaneous

Make it easy to get response

How soon we forget ...

Which is better — mini or full?

Get something for nothing

Don't sweat the small stuff

Wait 24 hours — prevent mistakes

Generate nonstop business

Tell 'em it's FREE

Terrific testimonials

How big should letters be on signs?

How to choose printing paper

Get paid faster (Part 1)

Get paid faster (Part 2)

Selling a waiting prospect

Noisy restaurants good for sales

What to do when your hard drive fails

Write clear instructions

Make it easy to get response

In direct marketing, the easier it is to respond, the greater the response.

The same is true in business.

I asked a friend to send me a copy of his employee manual (I'll have all kinds of great insight in future tips.) After I called and asked, I spent \$6 (and 5 minutes of my time) to guarantee fast delivery.

I simply picked up two Priority Mail boxes from the Post Office, in two different sizes (large and extra large.) The boxes are free. I affixed postage on both (\$3 each) and applied an outgoing label on the larger box and a self-addressed label on the smaller box. Then I stuffed the smaller one into the larger one.

*Would my friend have sent the info
without this effort?*
Maybe.

Was this extra work for me?
Yep.

Did I get what I wanted?
Sure did, and fast!

Remember, make it a no-brainer to respond, and you're more likely to get what you want.

How soon we forget ...

According to researcher H. F. Spitzer:

After 1 day, we forget 46% of what we've heard.

After 7 days, we forget 65%.

After 14 days, we forget 79%.

You can use this information to your advantage to crush the competition.

That's what I do.

When new prospects contact MailShop USA, they get a barrage of information.

We blitz 'em with 11 different promotional messages (by mail, phone, e-mail, and fax) in a 14-day period.

Which is better — mini or full?

Important question: What's the difference between self, mini, and full service at the gas pump?

This industry jargon confuses me.

I'm pretty smart. I know self service means you pump your own gas, and full service means you can sit in your car like a lazy bum while they pump for you.

But what is mini service?

Do they pump and I check oil? Do I pump and they check oil? Do we both pump and no one checks oil? Who checks the tires? Do I pay at the pump or inside?

Very stressful, that mini service!

If I owned a gas station, I'd print a sign that said:

Full service:

We pump your gas for you
We check your oil FREE
We check your tire pressure FREE
We check your fluid levels FREE
We wash your windows FREE
Super: \$1.99 per gallon
Extra: \$1.65 per gallon
Regular: \$1.59 per gallon

Mini service:

We pump your gas at discounted prices
Super: \$1.89 per gallon

Extra: \$1.55 per gallon
Regular: \$1.49 per gallon

Get something for nothing

The printing industry is notorious for specifying “fuzzy” quotes.

They’ll quote each job with a “plus or minus” factor of 10% in order to confuse you when you shop around on price alone.

For example, if you order 10,000 envelopes, you might get 11,000 or 9,000 (10,000, plus or minus 10%.) Either way, you’re charged for what they print, not what you asked for.

According to Bob Watson (one of my best friends, and an imaging consultant), one way to avoid this situation is to specify “no overs/unders” in your order. Chances are, you’ll get more than you requested, without paying extra.

Note: Bob’s one of the best in the industry. When you have questions on variable data imaging, contact him at bobsellsprint@aol.com .

Don't sweat the small stuff

Do you go nuts if your product or service isn't 100% perfect?

If you do, maybe you shouldn't.

My friend John is in the pizza business. In the early days, he made every pizza himself. Why? Because he took pride in crafting the perfect, 100%-round pizzas. Problem was, he focused too heavily on the product and put marketing on the back burner.

He almost went out of business.

His customers loved his pizza, but John almost had to close up shop because he had such a small customer base.

His expenses exceeded his revenues, even though he ran a tight ship.

Today, John's pizzas are 95% round. He's accepted that. He also employs 100+ people and serves his delicious pizza to thousands of customers each week.

John's standard of living has increased, too. He owns a shopping center, beachfront property, and a very nice house.

And the product? It's still "the best pizza in town."

Wait 24 hours — prevent mistakes

Just finished writing instructions for the print shop about a new project. Time to eat lunch.

I recommend you do the same — that is, get away and take a breather.

In the old days, I'd rush artwork to the print shop, only to get back a printed product filled with mistakes.

Now, when a project needs to be shipped to the printer, I prepare everything (artwork, type, samples, and instructions) and put it in an overnight delivery envelope. Then, I wait — usually 24 hours.

The next day, I look it over to make sure it's right.

Waiting an extra day helps you objectively review and proof the material you're about to send. You'll be surprised how many mistakes you'll find.

Generate nonstop business

Are you stuck in the “once and done” way of selling?

You know — make a sale to one person, then make a sale to another person.

Why not get your customers to become steady clients?

Offer them a buying schedule. Marketing folks call this “til forbid.”

Internet providers, cable TV companies, and book-of-the-month clubs are masters of the scheduled buy. They turn your service on and bill you until you say stop.

Can you offer the same for your customers? Here are some ideas I thought of while eating the #2 lunch combo at Wendy’s Old Fashioned Hamburgers today:

- Tie-of-the-month club
- Shirt-of-the-month club
- Daily fresh-flower service (great for restaurants)
- Chocolate-lovers’ club
- Prepared healthy-gourmet-meals club
- Game-of-the-month club
- Travel club (visit a different destination every month — great for retirees)

Tell ‘em it’s FREE

Just saw an advertisement that mentioned a telephone number with the area code 877.

That’s a free call. Did you know that? Most people don’t.

The surge of new toll-free numbers has confused a lot of people, so I recommend saying this:

Call us FREE at (877) 123-4567.

Better yet, do whatever it takes to get an 800 number.

Terrific testimonials

Are you in a business that's touchy about discounts and special offers?

For example, most dentists and lawyers want to grow their businesses without the usual discounting tactics used by retailers.

I agree. Instead, I recommend the power of the testimonial.

One of the top 3 reasons people are fearful of new business relationships is the lack of trust in someone they don't know. A third-party endorsement closes the lack-of-trust gap quickly.

Check out this winning endorsement:

"I avoided smiling until I met Dr. Gershberg — he's awesome. In less than 10 days, my stained, yellowed teeth became brighter and whiter with his new bleaching process. Now my smile looks great and people think I just won the lottery!

Thanks a million, Dr. Gershberg."

Markus Allen
West Chester, Pennsylvania

Wow — powerful stuff, eh? With referrals like that, Dr. Gershberg doesn't need to discount his prices to attract customers.

Testimonials are credible because they're not biased. If Dr. Gershberg boasted about himself, he'd be viewed

as a typical self-promoting salesman. When a client endorses a product or service, it's more believable.

Caution: Always get written permission from the customer to use his quote or you can be sued.

By the way, if you're in the Philly area and want a whiter, brighter smile, you can reach Dr. Gershberg at (610) 789-1001 — he's really good!

How big should letters be on signs?

Ready to order a sign for your retail location or your next trade show?

Keep this in mind: A 1-inch letter is easily seen 100 feet away. Use 2-inch letters for 200 feet, and so on.

Common mistake: creating a sign with letters too small.

Important: Ask a friend who's an expert in English (or a professional editor) to check your sign for errors. Don't spend money making a terrible impression!

How to choose printing paper

Here are six questions to ask yourself before you spend a nickel specifying paper for a printing job:

Is the paper right for the job?

When you mail postcards, the paper must be at least .007" thick. If it's too thin, the Post Office will add a surcharge to mail it. If you're stapling a booklet, the paper must be able to withstand puncturing. When a glue dot is to be applied, the paper's surface must be able to take adhesive.

Does it fit your image?

Besides its cost, remember: Paper should reinforce your image. It's usually cheaper to forgo the extra cost of printing a second color on the piece, and invest in a nicer paper — especially in low volume.

Is the paper in stock?

Consider using the print shop's house paper (paper usually stocked at the print shop.) That helps ensure the paper is always available — and usually at a great price, because it's bought in volume.

Is the paper politically correct?

For example, when you distribute your printed piece to environmental advocates, the extra cost of recycled paper might be worth it.

Will the paper behave?

Paper with a smooth finish reflects light most accurately, displaying the ink color in the purest form.

Paper with a rough finish scatters light, causing colors to fade a bit.

How heavy does the paper need to be?

If you're printing on both sides of the paper, use heavier stock. This helps reduce "show-through."

When copying documents on a single side, you can get away with standard 20-lb. copy paper. Double-sided printing requires 24-lb. paper.

If you're mailing an advertisement and want to hide the contents, use a thicker, heavier envelope. Just ask for sample envelopes to test the show-through factor.

Get paid faster (Part 1)

Specifying terms of net 30 days might be standard, but it can be vague.

Is it 30 days from the invoice date or the delivery date?

I suggest you make it clear by specifying a due date.

***“Payment is due in our office
on Monday, August 31, 2001”
is more specific than “Net 30.”***

Also, ask your lawyer about a late-fee policy (the language must be included on your invoice.)

Bonus tip: Don't be afraid to call the accounts-payable department if payment is late. Remember, the squeaky wheel gets paid. I'd call 7 days after the due date — that's enough time to wait for a payment (even if it comes from the other side of the country.)

The longer you wait to get paid, the harder it is to collect.

Get paid faster (Part 2)

Are your invoices delay-proof?

A scary number of companies are teaching their accounts-payable departments how to stretch payment cycles when they're short on funds (or so they can earn more interest on their money.)

Here's a quick checklist to help make sure your invoices fly through the red tape:

- Include your tax ID number.
- Clearly indicate your vendor number.
- Include customer purchase-order numbers
- Enclose an addressed #9 return envelope.
- Clearly display the due date, including day of the week.

For example:

"Payment due Monday, August 31, 2001."

- Perforate the remittance part of the invoice to fit in the enclosed envelope (3-1/2" from the top or bottom of an 8-1/2" by 11" page.) It's a pain to stuff a remittance slip into an envelope if it doesn't fit.
- Print your company name and contact information on the customer's copy as well as the remittance slip.

Bonus tip: Offer to send invoices electronically. This is attractive to cutting-edge companies that want to rid themselves of paper completely.

Selling a waiting prospect

Did you know business executives spend an average of 15 minutes per day on hold? That's over 60 hours of selling time available per year!

According to Anthony Stagliano, president of AudioMax [<http://www.audiomax.com>], 16 to 20 percent of callers will make a purchase based on an on-hold offer.

Some other interesting facts:

- *At least 7 out of 10 business calls are placed on hold.*
- *84% of callers hang up when placed on silent hold.*
- *The average caller waits 30 seconds before hanging up (during silence.)*
- *If music is playing, the caller stays on the line twice as long.*

Think twice about using a radio station for "hold" music if your competition advertises on the station you use.

Noisy restaurants good for sales

Restaurants looking to encourage their diners to eat faster are pumping loud, fast music through their sound systems.

That means more “table turns” in a night — and more revenue.

According to Stephanie Coulter, special-events coordinator at BoKaos in Beverly Hills, California, restaurants “do it to get people agitated so they eat faster, talk more, and drink more.”

According to the Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society, people chew an average of 4.4 bites a minute to fast music and only 3.8 bites a minute when the music is slow.

Dick Clark’s American Bandstand Grill® restaurants have fully computerized sound systems that automatically play faster and louder songs when the restaurants want to turn more tables.

What to do when your hard drive fails

When you're desperate to revive your hard drive, try a data-recovery company.

DriveSavers, in Novato, California specializes in rescuing data from burned, flattened, and otherwise mangled hard drives.

Their fees can range from \$500 to \$2,000 — or more — per recovery.

It's much less expensive to do regular backups. That way, if a hard drive fails, you can access the data on another computer. You can visit their Web site at: <http://www.drivesavers.com> .

Removable drives help simplify the backup process. Iomega [<http://www.iomega.com>] sells removable drives for both PCs and Macs.

Write clear instructions

Never assume your suppliers are mind readers.

When writing instructions (avoid oral ones), pretend you're writing to a 10-year-old.

Don't say:

"Print the job like last time."

This isn't realistic. It assumes the supplier has the details handy (usually not the case.)

I take the time to be clear. I write instructions one day, and then I review them the next day to check for clarity.

Postal

Is the Post Office tossing your mail?

Save your bulk mail from the trash can

Remove costly duplicates

Find out your official address

Point customers to your Web site

Is the Post Office tossing your mail?

The Post Office confesses that up to one third of bulk mail is immediately trashed because the addresses are wrong. Misspellings, lack of street names, old addresses, and the like contribute to nondelivery of mail.

Unlike first-class mail, bulk mail gets only one shot. Mail with an incorrect address is bound for the trash (without your knowledge.)

Save your bulk mail from the trash can

Want to have bulk mail delivered when your customers or prospects move from their homes?

Simply add the phrase "or current resident" to the address.

Remove costly duplicates

Did you know 5% to 10% of the average mailing list consists of duplicate names and addresses?

It's unprofessional — and expensive — to send duplicate mail. Have your list “de-duped” and invest the savings elsewhere.

For example:

Let's say your list has 5,000 records, you mail 4 times each year, and each mail piece costs 40 cents.

By removing duplicates, you could save \$800.00 per year!

The best part: You get higher response (for less money.)

Find out your official address

Are you sure the mail addressed to you is deliverable?

For example, first-class mail addressed to you at “Broad and Main Street” might get delivered — but bulk mail won’t.

To be sure you get proper delivery, track down your official postal address.

The quickest way to do this is to check your daily stack of mail. If a piece has the “ZIP + 4” (the ZIP code plus 4 extra digits), then it’s likely to have the official street address listed just above the city and state.

Always include any suite or apartment number, too.

Point customers to your Web site

The cheapest, fastest, and easiest way to promote your Web site is with a simple postcard.

Make sure you list three reasons to visit the site — games, contests, free information reports, etc.

During a recent consultation with a record-company president who was promoting a tour, I recommended he send postcards to the fan-club members announcing the chance to win prizes (T-shirts, money, CDs, etc..)

Each postcard would have a unique number printed just above the name and address (easy to do with database software.) Fans could visit the singer's Web site to see if their number matched. If so, they would win instantly.

I also recommended changing the winning numbers every day, to increase the odds each fan would visit the site on a daily basis.

Pricing

Price isn't important to everyone

How to announce a price increase

Increase prices without losing customers

Price isn't important to everyone

Remember — If we all bought based on the cheapest price, we'd all be driving Yugos to work.

How to announce a price increase

I saw this notice at a bagel shop:

“Attention customers —
starting next Tuesday
our prices will be going up!”

I'd never recommend saying that.

Instead, turn bad news into good news. Invite your customers to buy as much as they want at the current prices.

Increase prices without losing customers

Several small doses of medicine are easier to digest than one big one.

The same is true when you increase prices.

Instead of one big increase each year, increase your prices twice a year in smaller increments.

Increases of 5 percent every 6 months seem better than 10 percent at one time.

Promotion (Part 1)

Designing sale announcements

What's good response?

Write a book

How to write a special report

Great investment in direct marketing

How to get testimonials

How to get mail opened

Feature your customers

Covering all bases

Hockey team woos fans with DM campaign

Mail before you prospect

Improve your business cards

Online tech info

Business-card don'ts

Give your promo the "mom test"

Priority parking for VIPs

Surprise customers with newspaper clips

How to market a rock band

The 10 worst mistakes in direct mail

Does bulk e-mail work?

FREE way to promote your name

Use expiration dates

Designing sale announcements

When you're designing promotional materials, one factor to consider is who will receive them.

For example, many women place coupons and sale announcements in their purses for future use.

Promotional materials that you'll mail to women should be small enough to fit in purses.

What's good response?

At least once a day, I get asked what the response rate should be for promotions.

Here's my answer — I don't know (or care.)

Why?

I don't know — because a promotion for \$7-million corporate jets is sure to get a different response than a promotion for discounted \$100 bills.

There are too many factors that affect response.

An offer of free information gets more response than an ad for information that costs something.

A promotion for a special sale generally outpulls a promotion for a clearance sale.

If you sell children's toys and promote to electricians, I guarantee lower response than if you run the same ad in parents' magazines.

And I don't care — because response does not necessarily generate income. I know a company that got over 1,000 responses for free information and generated zero revenue dollars. I also know very rich publishers who generate millions of dollars in revenue with a 0.2% response.

Bottom line: Focus on conversion — turning responders into buyers.

Write a book

What's the fastest way to become recognized as an expert in your field?

Write a book.

I started out by writing a 2-page newsletter. By now, I've written hundreds of short articles and tips.

Do I write books to make money? Not initially.

But books, articles, and special reports position me as the expert. And people skip the lower-priced competition when they can buy from a trusted expert.

How to write a special report

In the tip above, we discussed the benefits of writing articles, special reports, and books to position yourself as the expert in your field.

Now, it's time to make it happen.

The first place I start with is the title. It's the headline that creates the excitement to make people to rush to the phone (or visit your store) and take action.

Here's one of my favorite title/headline formulas:

"___ questions you must ask before investing/
spending a
penny/nickel/dime in/on/with _____"

For example:

"22 questions you must ask before
investing a dime in mutual funds"

"19 questions you must ask before
spending a nickel on classified advertising"

"101 questions you must ask before
spending a penny on wedding photography"

Great investment in direct marketing

The Direct Marketing Association commissioned The WEFA Group to measure the return on investment of direct-response marketing by insurance and financial-services companies.

The study reported each dollar invested in direct marketing in 1997 yielded \$8.01 in revenue.

That's a 700 percent return on investment!

Mailing to a targeted list with a hard-to-refuse offer is an awesome way to generate business. Stop what you're doing, find a way to mail something, and make it happen!

How to get testimonials

It doesn't matter if you're a dentist, a bulk e-mailer, a florist, or a charity ... people believe testimonials!

If you're not using testimonials, you're missing out on a great way to promote your business.

How do you get testimonials?

Easy: Write to your satisfied customers and ask for them.

According to Drew Whitman, the secret is to say, "We want to make you famous!" In fact, that should be the very first line of your letter.

Then say you want their honest opinions about your product or service. Explain that you're putting together a new ad, brochure, etc., and you'd like to use their testimonial — with a photo, if possible.

Promise them a few copies of the finished piece to show to friends and family, and most folks will be happy to comply.

How to get mail opened

Fact: The recipient's name is the first item to be scanned on a mail piece — that's how one determines what's junk mail and what's not.

Here's a great way to ensure a piece gets opened: Add the nickname instead of the title.

For example, Dan Poynter (a self-publishing expert) is known by many people as "Mr. Publishing."

Here's how one of Dan's colleagues addresses mail to him (and it gets opened every time):

Dan Poynter
"Mr. Publishing"
Para Publishing
530 Ellwood Ridge Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93117-1047

Feature your customers

Smart bar owners reward frequent customers by hanging VIP plaques on the walls and offering free drinks on slow nights. Guess what happens — the proud customers bring in their friends and boast. And the bar owners generate more revenue.

Or you could mount photos of customers on foam board (cheaper than plaques.)

Cost: under \$15. Return on investment: a lot.

Covering all bases

Question:

Should you direct your marketing efforts to existing customers, or new prospects?

Answer:

Both.

Just got off the phone with a client in the floor-covering business.

He wants to tweak his current mail campaign. ("Tweak," I think, is French for "get a better price on printing.")

Anyway, like most, he mails monthly, trying to convince potential customers to buy from him. He says it's profitable if 20 people respond and buy, out of a mailing of 10,000 pieces.

I recommended he continue the plan (never stop doing something that works) and also consider these winning ideas:

Hold a contest

I'd call it the "Win brand-new carpet in your entire house" contest.

Every month, his company carpets a lucky winner's house — no purchase necessary. Why? It generates the best possible mailing list — after all, people who don't need carpet won't enter.

The best and least expensive way to advertise this is via letter-sized inserts in the coupon section of the regional paper.

Take the winner's picture each month and promote it in the next advertisement. For example: "Joan Linden of Philadelphia was April's winner. You could be May's winner — just complete the contest form below and enter. No purchase necessary."

Create special offers for existing clients

For example, send postcards to the in-house customer list announcing a private sale. Include discounts, clowns for the kids, contests, etc. It's important to say something like, "This private sale is exclusive and will not be available to the general public."

Give a FREE gift

In your promotions, try offering a FREE gift.

This extra nudge might push a customer over to your side.

A friend of mine owns a fabric store and uses this strategy with great success.

The free gift? It's a spool of thread. His cost is about a dime. And his customers love it.

Hockey team woos fans with DM campaign

The National Hockey League requires that all new expansion franchises sell 12,000 season tickets before their first game.

The Minnesota Wild implemented a smart marketing plan. And by the time their first home game was still more than 2 years away, they had already obtained 9,800 commitments for season tickets.

First, they held a contest to come up with a name for the new team (an excellent way to gather names and addresses of enthusiasts.)

Next, they stuffed an insert into Ticketmaster® mailings.

Then they mailed to the people who had held season tickets for North Star games. (That was the old Minnesota team, which moved to Dallas.) This was a great move — marketing season tickets to people who had bought them before.

Here are some other promotional ideas:

- Offer a free gift for referring a friend.
- Partner with local skating rinks.
- Give school coaches a FREE ticket when 10 or more students buy tickets.
- Cross-promote at roller-hockey tournaments.

Mail before you prospect

Consider mailing information to a prospect before you call. This can help you get more buyers.

Improve your business cards

Do your business cards sell for you?

Business cards should attract and begin developing a relationship with a potential user of your product or service.

Your card is important because it represents you.

Here are some tips to make your card work better for you:

Put it in plastic

Laminated business cards are hard to throw away. The extra few pennies help guarantee your card stays on file.

Say it in color

Full-color business cards, with your photo, make it easy for prospects to remember you. Have your photo shot by a professional (\$25 to \$100 for one portrait — well worth the investment.)

List all contact information

Include name, title, company name, address, phone and fax numbers (with area code), URL, and e-mail address.

List your services

On the front, print (in italic letters) “See other side.” On the reverse, list some services you offer. For example: open 24 hours; 4-hour service at no additional charge; money-back guarantee.

Show off!

Gather a few testimonials (endorsements) and print them on the reverse side.

Online tech info

Need straight answers to computer questions?

Check out <http://www.whatis.com> .

It offers clearly defined computer terms, arranged alphabetically and within categories.

The site also offers links to software companies' home pages.

Business-card don'ts

Don't make these mistakes with your business card:

Don't write changes by hand

If your address has changed, print new cards. Business cards are cheap (as low as \$9 per 500.) Plus, ink changes are sloppy and unprofessional. Your image is important.

Give it the "grandma test"

Show your card to a few older friends. If they can't read the type, it's too small.

Avoid neon colors

Bright, fluorescent colors are hard to read.

DON'T USE ALL CAPS

Text in all capital letters is harder to read than regular text.

Don't assume your card won't travel

Someone might give or send your card to a friend in another state (or country.) Include the area code with the phone number, and include the country name.

Give your promo the “mom test”

Far too many promos are hard to understand.

That’s why I give all my ads the “mom test.” That is, I ask someone in my family (could be my mom, wife, brother — whoever) to help proof my promos.

I don’t ask them to check the spelling or grammar (for that, I consult a professional editor.) I just ask their opinion of the content. Am I getting the main benefits across in a clear and concise way?

My mom doesn’t get involved in the gritty details of my business. So when she understands my ad, then I’m certain my audience will get it as well.

Priority parking for VIPs

Here's a premium that's easy to give away, costs virtually nothing, and gives you an edge over your competition:

Priority parking.

Here's how it works:

Have your local sign company print signs that say "Parking for VIP members only." Place them in front of your store's closest parking spots.

Then, print small car-window decals that say "VIP Parking." Include your store name in small letters.

Give the decals to your best customers (or those enrolled in your VIP program.)

Surprise customers with newspaper clips

Want a quick, easy way to stay in touch with an extra 200+ people each year? Send them newspaper clippings.

I asked my print shop to supply me with small invitation-style envelopes with my name and address on the back flap.

The front of each envelope is blank, except for the recipient's address and a small note on the side ...for example, "FYI, Bob — thought you might find this interesting."

Every day, I make it a point to find an article of interest to one of my clients or hot prospects (or even future employees.)

For example, after reading an article in the Wall Street Journal about coupon distribution over the Internet, I cut it out and mailed it to a prospect in that business.

Good sources for information include the Wall Street Journal, trade magazines, and industry newsletters.

How to market a rock band

If a rock band hired me as its marketing director ...

I'd call a mandatory meeting at the local 24-hour diner. I'd tell the band members the marketing is more important than the music. If they disagree, I predict they'll become the best musicians anyone NEVER heard. I see too many great musicians who are waiting because they spent lots of time practicing their music but no time marketing.

Here's my formula for success:

Collect names for a mailing list

I'd go to Kinko's® and print 4.25" by 5.5" postcards that say, "Get our concert dates by mail," followed by a request for name and address. I wouldn't ask for a phone number — there's never a need to call, and some people get turned off by the prospect of being put on a telemarketing list. Also, I'd ask for legible printing, in ALL UPPERCASE letters (it's easier to read for data entry.)

On the other side, I'd print the band's name and address and a box that says, "Place a first-class stamp here." We'd have a box at each concert where fans could drop the completed cards, but some people might prefer to fill them out at home and then mail them.

Create the list

I'd use FileMaker Pro (my favorite database program available at <http://www.filemaker.com>) to store names and addresses of current and potential fans. I'd set up the software to automatically add a unique serial

number to each record (more on this later.)

I'd ask someone (maybe a loyal fan) to enter the info — not just initially, but also after every concert, when we've collected more cards. (And I'd pay that person appropriately — maybe 10 cents per entry.) Each month, I'd get a backup copy of the mailing list (in case my loyal fan decides to hold the list hostage once the band gets popular.)

Add important contact names to the list

We'd obtain names and addresses of influential people. It's worth 25 cents to mail a postcard every month to the head of RCA Records.

- Increase the mailing list

I'd contact other bands that have the same sound or audience, and rent their mailing lists. After all, Billy Joel fans probably like Elton John, too.

- Mail postcards announcing concert dates

Some bands I know try to quickly design and print date announcements just before their gigs. Sometimes they procrastinate and mail too close to their performance. Many people who might have attended the concerts don't, because they didn't know in time.

I wouldn't make that mistake. I'd print a year's worth of "shells" — postcards with the band's photo and contact info, including the concert hotline number. Each month, I'd take 1/12th of the shells and have them printed in black ink with that month's concert dates. I'd mail them about 15 days before the month's first performance (always mailed on a Thursday.)

One thing would be guaranteed — the postcards would ALWAYS be mailed on schedule. They'd be the #1 priority of marketing the band.

- Generate interest with FREE gifts

I'd let the fans know they could win exciting prizes — \$500.00, or FREE t-shirts, or FREE CDs — when they bring the postcards to each performance. How? Each postcard would be printed with that unique number I mentioned earlier. Several times during the performance, the band would announce winning numbers. The prospect of winning a FREE gift is a powerful incentive.

The 10 worst mistakes in direct mail

According to syndicated writer Jeff Dobkin, you can increase your chances of success by learning from his mistakes.

It's just as easy to succeed as to fail, so follow these few simple guidelines of what not to do.

Don't worry, you'll find lots of other mistakes to make on your own — but at least you won't have to make these:

Not knowing your audience

Every ad should be to a specific targeted group that you research until you know it intimately. Aim for your readers' personal hot spots, in a writing style and level they're comfortable with. Learn how they feel and act, and what they like and dislike. Then, craft your style and content specifically to your readership.

Mailing to the wrong list

This is probably the most common — and most fatal — error made in mailings. Spend as much time on researching your list as you do on the creative aspects of writing and layout and on the research about your products, pricing, and offer. Unless the people on your mailing list want or need your product or service, they'll be tough to convince, and probably impossible to sell. Offering Buick mufflers to Chevy owners just won't work, no matter how great the copy or the price.

Lack of clear objectives

Nothing muddies good writing like not having a specific goal. Make sure you know where you're going with each piece you write, and then stay focused.

Write your objective first, in the upper right-hand corner of your page, and refer to it often. Stay on target. My objective is to get people to respond — to call, write, or send in the business-reply card. 99 percent of the time we offer a free brochure or booklet, so we can send a more qualified prospect a harder-hitting package.

Price before offer

“Only \$49.95!” No matter what you’re selling, a price has no meaning until readers know what they’re getting. Make sure you tell them about your product first. If your #1 sales point is your product’s low price, you may introduce the price early on in the same sentence.

Price before benefits

“Just \$89.95!” may sound like a great price to you for a stereo, but if you present it first — before showing exactly how great the product is — most of your readers will toss your brochure before they even see your offer. You need to tell them what makes your price so great in terms of benefits (what’s in it for them.)

Wrong price point

There are thousands of theories on how to price your product correctly. Funny, each formula gives you a different answer. My formula is correct, and it works with every product, every time: Let the market set the price. You do this by testing each price point you think will work, and seeing which one brings in not only the most orders, but the most overall profit. That’s your price. Simple, isn’t it?

Inadequate testing

There’s no reason to lose big money in direct mail. Everything is testable, and you should test small mailings until one is clearly a winner. Then ramp up slowly: Next time, mail to a slightly larger test group. If

that works, test still larger mailings. Until you know you're absolutely going to be profitable, just stick with smaller test mailings — so you'll never lose big money. How will you know you'll be successful? As long as you mail the same package to the same list, your results should be the same.

Wrong objective

Asking for the sale instead of selling the call can be a fatal mistake. The objective of a small (or classified) ad for any product over ten dollars is to get the prospect to call or write in. Unless you're sending a long, hard-selling direct-mail piece (or have a full-page direct-selling ad), your objective should be to get the reader to call for additional information (or for your free informational booklet.) Generally, you do not ask for the sale in an ad or a short letter; you ask for a call. Then, offer the product, show the benefits, and sell the call hard.

Wrong headline

The headline is the single most important element of your ad. Solely on the basis of this one line, your reader makes the decision to continue reading — or not to. Use the Jeff Dobkin "100 to 1" rule to create both the headline of your ad and the teaser line on your envelope: Write 100 headlines, then pick the best one. (No TV while you're doing this.) Spend several days on this task. If you can figure out a quicker and better way, please let me know.

Not telling your readers exactly what you want them to do

You should tell your readers several times exactly what you want them to do. Be specific. Let readers know exactly what action you want them to take; tell them, and tell them again. I wrote a sales letter for a printing company and actually asked a dozen times for readers to call! Excessive? After mailing it, the printer had to hire two more people to answer the phones. If I can

smoothly weave “Please call” into the copy that many times, you can ask for the call at least three or four times without being obnoxious.

Source: Jeff Dobkin
<http://www.dobkin.com>

Does bulk e-mail work?

I'm asked at least once a day, "Does bulk e-mail work?" That depends ...

Yes, it works if your goal is to tick off lots of people in a very short amount of time.

Yes, it works if you want those angry people to never buy anything from you — ever — and maybe even tell their friends about your spam.

And yes, because it's free (or very close to free), it works if you want to mail millions of messages at virtually no cost and get a few positive responses (if you're lucky.)

Proposed legislation in California could make unsolicited e-mail illegal in California and even across the country.

The proposal requires bulk e-mailers to add a toll-free telephone number or valid return e-mail address to make it easy for recipients to be removed from the mailing list.

Additionally, unsolicited e-mail advertising would have to contain "ADV:" as the first four characters in the subject line (so it screams to recipients, "Hey, this is advertising mail!")

The second part of the bill awards damages — \$50 for each message sent, up to a maximum of \$25,000 per day.

E-mail is a wonderful way to stay in touch with people after you've already established a relationship with

them. After all, would you ever get mad if the cable guy called you after an installation to make sure everything was working right? Of course not.

FREE way to promote your name

Here's a quick and easy way to promote your name:
Endorse a product you like.

I did this with Bradley Communications, publisher of "Publicity Blitz" (a database of press contacts.)

The result: My picture, my name, and a short quote are in their advertising (which goes to potential customers for my postcard service.)

It's another win-win situation (my favorite.) Bradley Communications gets an unsolicited testimonial. I get my name promoted FREE.

Here's another twist on the same concept: Endorse a trade publication your market reads.

For example:

"If you're serious about direct marketing, Target Marketing Magazine is a must-read. The article on 'Getting Past the Gatekeeper' alone was worth the subscription price."

Markus Allen
Publisher
Marketing Tip of the Day
West Chester, Pennsylvania

Your endorsement is sure to be mentioned in the next issue.

Use expiration dates

This was on a pizza coupon:

“Expires next Friday.”

Huh? What Friday would that be? Talk about confusing!

I see a lot of advertising roll through my office without expiration dates. That’s a mistake.

Expiration dates give urgency to your promotion. Savvy marketers know it’s better when people buy today, rather than tomorrow. When there’s no rush, people set your promo aside — and usually forget about it.



Promotion (Part 2)

Get in the door with a FREE sample
Transport customers to your company
Don't say, "To be honest with you ..."
Persuading a prospect
Easy way to ask for last names
Poor listening habits
Why scripting works
The great "How are you today?" debate
Avoid being put on hold
Ask the sales department for help
Avoid interrupting
Selling a waiting prospect
Avoid the switchboard
Ask for help with unfamiliar names
Call at lunch for the best response
Violating new federal telemarketing laws?

Get in the door with a FREE sample

Want to gain a lifetime client?

One way to do that is to give something away FREE.

Here's an example:

I advised my equipment dealer to give away a FREE sample bottle of an awesome cleaner he sells. It quickly evaporates red meter ink (the kind in the postage meter that's always impossible to get off your hands and clothes.)

I recommended he hand-deliver the sample himself. Once he's in the door, he can ask, "How's your mailing machine doing? Everything running well?"

What a great way to meet the decision maker. Total cost: 50 cents for the free sample.

Transport customers to your company

One of my subscribers is the marketing chief at QVC (the home-shopping channel.)

He asked me to help them with a problem. They couldn't understand why it was so difficult to get a live studio audience to attend their new live-format shows.

The answer was simple. They assumed after a few announcements, crowds of people would travel to the studio and watch the show. Of course, they didn't because the "what's-in-it-for-me" factor was slim.

Here's what I recommended:

Announce a \$99 QVC/Philadelphia tour!

Pick a large city (let's use New York City as an example) and mail postcards announcing a one-day tour from there.

A luxury bus would pick people up at a central location (let's say Yankee Stadium) at 10 a.m. Saturday.

The bus would arrive at Philadelphia's waterfront area by lunchtime. Of course, cheese steaks would top the menu.

A pretzel-making tour and a visit to the Liberty Bell would follow.

The bus would then follow the historic route to Valley Forge Park.

After a stop at George Washington's log cabins, the

tour would make its final Philadelphia stop at QVC's Studio City. A two-hour behind-the-scenes tour would precede the live one-hour show.

Here's the hook: QVC would give away a FREE \$10.00 gift certificate to their gift store. And of course it would expire that day. Note: I toured the gift store and was hard-pressed to find items under \$10.00.

Don't say, "To be honest with you ..."

What kind of impression do you want to give people?

When someone asks you a question, don't begin your answer with, "To be honest with you ..."

There's no need for that overused phrase.

In fact, it might make it sound like this time you're being honest but in the past you haven't been.

That's not the impression you want to give.

Better: Pause two seconds, and then answer the question.

Persuading a prospect

According to sales coach Hilton Johnson, it's easy to reduce sales resistance.

The next time your prospect hesitates to move forward with your proposal, say this:

“Based on what you're saying,
this is probably not for you.
Shall I close your file?”

Selling is a game, and fear of loss is a great motivator. When you stop the game, many people will fear they'll lose out on something important, and they'll show more interest in your proposal.

Easy way to ask for last names

My company sometimes gets calls from people looking for information who give their first name but won't divulge their last name.

"Don in Carlsbad, California" doesn't cut it here at MailShop USA. I want everything — including the last name.

To get the prospect's last name, say this (no embellishing) just after you learn the first name:

"...and Don's last name is?"

This works almost every time.

Poor listening habits

Are you guilty of these 3 common habits?

Interrupting

When you interrupt, you're saying, "What you have to say is not as important as what I have to say."

Even worse is performing other tasks while pretending to listen.

Worrying about not having all the answers

You don't need to have all the answers to be a good listener. Sometimes it's not an answer your speaker wants, but your understanding.

Thinking of what to say next

It's okay to pause for a second and then respond to a question, rather than thinking of the answer well before the other person has finished talking.

Why scripting works

Ever watch Peter Jennings on ABC World News tonight?

Boy, he's good — sounds like he's talking to you, one to one, and he never stutters or botches his words.

Why?

Because he's the best salesman you ever heard. Plus, he's reading the longest script you'll NEVER see.

New consultants at my company are initially intimidated by scripts:

“That's not me. I sound like a typical salesman. People will think I'm reading a script!”

All valid points.

But when you talk to me on the phone, I use scripts to answer your questions.

Why? Because they work. Scripts help you stay on target and clearly communicate benefits.

Sure, I add impromptu comments in between. But when I say, “We do all the work for less than you could do it yourself,” that's a word-for-word script developed by a professional copywriter.

The great “How are you today?” debate

“How are you today?”

It’s a question sure to be asked on a sales call.

People are conditioned to break the ice at the beginning of conversations.

But that 4-word question screams out “SALESPERSON!” Why intentionally say something that’s sure to create resistance?

How about getting right to the point with an intro and benefit statement? Try something like this:

“Mr.Wyse,it’s Art at ComputersUSA.

“Yesterday you asked for information about our software for fixing your printer’s problems.

“I have a new report called ‘16 ways to fix your printer problems in 5 minutes (or less.)’ All I need is your permission to fax it to your attention. Is your fax number (123) 456-7890?”

Now,that’s a great way to pique Mr.Wyse’s interest!

Avoid being put on hold

If the receptionist answers the phone, "ABC Company, can you hold?" and you know the name of the person you're calling, respond with, "Holding for Joe Smith, please."

You'll avoid the hold time.

Ask the sales department for help

When gathering information on a company, talk to someone in the sales department.

Salespeople like to talk and can give you tremendously useful info on the company and its direction.

Source: Art Sobczak
<http://www.businessbyphone.com>

Avoid interrupting

When someone is talking to you and you have the urge to interrupt, write your thought down instead.

Wait until they finish, and then ask them to go back to the previous idea.

Selling a waiting prospect

Did you know business executives spend an average of 15 minutes per day on hold? That's over 60 hours of selling time available per year!

According to Anthony Stagliano, president of AudioMax, 16 to 20 percent of callers will make a purchase based on an on-hold offer.

Some other interesting facts:

- At least 7 out of 10 business calls are placed on hold.
- 84% of callers hang up when placed on silent hold.
- The average caller waits 30 seconds before hanging up (during silence.)
- If music is playing, the caller stays on the line twice as long.

Think twice about using a radio station for "hold" music if your competition advertises on the station you use.

Avoid the switchboard

Having trouble getting through an electronic switchboard?

Dial a digit or two off the main number, and you might be connected to someone's direct line.

For example, if the number is 555-1000, try 555-1002.

Ask for help with unfamiliar names

You usually don't make a good first impression on someone by mispronouncing his or her name.

When you're calling someone with an unfamiliar name, ask the receptionist for help:

"Yes, I'm looking for Dave ...
please help me with the
last name here, it's S-M-A ..."

Most of the time, the receptionist will say the name for you.

Call at lunch for the best response

Telephone-sales expert Art Sobczak [<http://www.businessbyphone.com>] suggests you call tough-to-reach decision makers during lunch, or before the regular starting time.

You might get through more easily.

Violating new federal telemarketing laws?

Recipients of telemarketing calls are fed up and are fighting back.

A few professional plaintiffs are suing to recover damages from telemarketers in small-claims court.

As a telemarketer, you must have a written “do-not-call” policy and a “do-not-call” list. The policy must be made available to any consumer who requests it. According to direct-marketing lawyer Tyler Prochnow (816-292-2000), you need to create a simple document that covers the following points:

- Explains that the document describes your do-not-call policy.
 - States that all of your employees have a copy of the document; that all new telemarketing reps will receive adequate training; and that you will, to the best of your ability, ensure that all employees adhere to the policy.
 - Describes how do-not-call names are flagged (for example, are they in a central database?)
 - Explains whether do-not-call names are purged or cross-referenced.
- Send a copy of your policy to everyone who requests it. When you do, keep a copy of everything, including the addressed envelope, in case you need it for evidence.

By taking these few simple steps, you may be able to

avoid the \$500.00 fine for violating certain telemarketing laws.

Staff

*Show employees where company dollars go
Tell 'em why when giving instructions
Key points for an orientation handout*

Show employees where company dollars go

It's understandable for your employees to feel they're underpaid compared to the dollars that are deposited in your company's bank account.

That was the case at one company ...until the owner gave the staff access to all expense data.

Every hour, the numbers are updated and available for his staff to view.

Two immediate benefits:

- The "I demand a raise" chatter ceased.
 - His staff began to look for money-saving, business-producing opportunities.
- This is commonly known as open-book management.

Some business owners think it's dangerous. It probably could be dangerous — especially at companies where the owners make obscenely high salaries and drive the newest, most expensive Mercedes.

Tell ‘em why when giving instructions

Like deer in headlights.

That’s the look I used to get from new staff members when giving them instructions.

Now, I explain the end result — the “why”:

“Bubba, I want to fax a message about our new service to drum up extra revenue. Can I get a listing of all owners of small companies in the retail business sometime this week?”

It works — try it.

Key points for an orientation handout

Here are 10 key points to cover in a handout for new employees:

1) An overview of the company

What you sell (the problems you solve for your customers) and how long you've been in business, as well as who the key people in the company are and what they do.

2) Company goals

What you hope to accomplish in the next year and/or five years.

3) Location of facilities

Give directions to the photocopier room, eating areas, restrooms, and other common areas. Don't forget the designated area for smokers.

4) Work hours

Explain the policies on breaks, lunch hours, absences, and late arrivals (very important.) Don't forget the unusual — like what happens when an employee is summoned to jury duty.

5) Compensation plan

Detail the compensation policies and benefits. Explain how and when paychecks are distributed and how raises are determined.

6) Reward and incentive programs

Explain how employees can earn more.

7) Health and safety considerations

Map out a floor plan of your building, complete with

fire escapes, exits, and first-aid kits.

8) Office equipment

Explain the workings of your phone system and other office equipment.

9) Emergency information

List names and numbers of people to call in case of problems or emergencies.

10) Termination policies

Explain why and how an employee would be terminated.

Testing

Track ad response

Test higher prices

Track ad response

The quickest, easiest, and best way to lower your marketing costs is to market smarter. One way to market smarter is to track ad response.

When you track response, you instantly leverage your marketing dollars in your favor.

For example, if you've written an ad, do a test run to a limited market, using 4 different versions of the ad. Use a different headline for each version, but keep the rest of the ad exactly the same (this is important.)

Then list the phone number differently for each version. For example, you could add "extension 101" after the telephone number in version #1, "extension 102" in version #2, etc.

By tracking the number of callers who request each extension, you'll know which headline is the most effective. Use that headline for the full-scale promotion.

Note: To keep this example simple, I discussed just one version of the promotion (one version — four headlines.) In future tips, I'll explain why you should always advertise at least two versions of each promotion.

Test higher prices

You'll be amazed at how much more you'll take in (without losing many customers) when you raise prices.

If you can sell an item for \$39, I bet you'll sell just as many for \$49.

But never assume. Always test first.

Upselling

Promote gift certificates

Offer a checklist

Increase the amount customers buy

Ask for referrals (bonus tip)

Promote gift certificates

I wish I owned a retail business.

Why? Because I could easily sell gift certificates.

Gift certificates offer win-win situations for both retailers and customers. Here are some facts:

1 out of 4 never get used

On average, 25% of gift certificates never get redeemed. When you sell \$10,000.00 worth of gift certificates, you could pocket \$2,500.00!

Customers pay to network for you — wow!

Most people give gift certificates to friends and family — many of whom have probably never visited your store. Why spend hard-earned money on expensive advertising (to acquire new customers) when you can have your customers spread the word FREE? In fact, when people came in to redeem gift certificates, I'd extend a great offer (a FREE dessert, a car wash for half price, etc.), to encourage them to come back again. You want them to get in the habit of stopping by.

Less business for your competitors

When someone buys a \$100.00 gift certificate from you, it's pretty likely that the recipient will redeem it at your store instead of paying \$100.00 to buy the product from someone else.

Immediate cash flow

One Outback Steakhouse® generated \$30,000.00+ in gift-certificate sales before Christmas last year! Could you use a lump of cash today?

Offer a checklist

Ever shop for food and forget one or two items?

Of course!

That's why the checklist was invented.

Why not print a checklist for your customers? When you do, they'll reward you with more business.

A supermarket offered this 4th of July checklist:

Going on a picnic? Don't forget —

- Lawn chairs
- Cooler
- Beverage jug
- Barbecue grill
- Charcoal
- Lighter fluid

... and on and on.

Great idea. And something any business can offer!

101

Increase the amount customers buy

A great way to make more money is to ask your customers to buy more often.

When shampoo manufacturers added the word “repeat” on the instruction label, sales almost doubled instantly.

Ask for referrals (bonus tip)

For many businesses, the primary way of gaining new customers is by word of mouth (i.e., referrals.)

The easiest way to get referrals is simply to ask.

Send a letter to your best clients. Ask them to write down, on a supplied postage-paid return postcard, the name of one friend who would enjoy the benefits of your product or service.

Classic mistake: Don't ask for more than one referral — that's too intimidating. You want to make it easy for your clients to respond.

When you receive the responses, write a letter to the potential new customers. With each letter, enclose a return postcard with a stamp on it (most people find it hard to throw away a postcard with a live stamp.) In bold letters, ask the prospect to return the enclosed card (by mail or in person) to get a free gift.

Of course, you'll need to reward your clients for the referrals. I'll offer ideas on rewards in future tips.