

Tracking & Testing Tips

Tracking the results of your mailing(s) is an important part of making direct mail work. Direct mail is a medium with many factors, and each of these factors must be working in order for your mailpiece to be successful. Tracking who responds to each of your mailings will help you to better understand who your target audience should be and what attracts their attention. The tips below can help you establish ways to improve the way you track and test your mailings and, in turn, improve your response rate.

1 – Code Your Mailings

If you mail the same, or a very similar mailing multiple times it is helpful to include a discreet reference, known as a “source code,” on the response device. This could be as simple as a small printed date on the reply card or envelope, or distinguished by a code on a coupon offer. For organizations that are constantly experimenting with different mail pieces, it may be beneficial to have your receptionist or sales people routinely inquire as to where new customers learned of your organization.

If you are using multiple lists when you mail, you will want to be sure to code each list separately. By doing this you can track which lists are producing better results than others, and discontinue the use of lists whose recipients aren't responding.

2 – Keep Detailed Records

Ideally, when a recipient responds to your mailing, you should be entering them into your customer database and carefully noting their response as a result of that particular mailing. Try to collect any information your database will allow; name, address, age, gender and occupation are basic pieces of information. Other helpful facts would be purchase dates, actual items purchased and how these items were paid for. You may want to look into using a survey to learn more about your customers. A survey could be mailed as a business reply card to your customer list or simply completed by your customers in-store. Acquiring as much information as possible will continue to help you define who you should be mailing to.

3 – Test Your Mailers

Once you've carefully tracked your mailings, you should begin to develop a more predictable list to mail to. At that point, you may want to start testing the mailpiece itself. There are endless elements of a mailpiece to test: the way it is addressed, the typeface used in the address, the teaser line, etc. Additionally, you could go as far to test the headline, the cover image, the physical size of the mailer, the paper it's printed on and a host of other items. Direct mail is a medium made for testing; it's designed to constantly be changed and challenged. However, be aware that unless you're testing an entire redesign, it's a good idea to test only one element at a time.

4 – Avoid the Big Mistake

Have you mailed successfully in the past? If so, keep mailing! The number one mistake mailers make is discontinuing their mailing efforts prematurely. As long as your mailings are producing enough revenue to cover what it cost to produce the mailing, you should continue to mail. After all, you want your name to be at the forefront of your customer's mind when they need you—the only way to do this is to be sure that they see your name and message often! Over time, consistent mailers should see consistent response from their mailings.