



Mail Messenger is written, designed and produced by United Printing & Mailing. United is headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona, and has been in the direct mail business since 1965. We are eager to form partnerships with our clients, whether they are locally or nationally based. We offer not only complete mailing services, but also graphic design, data acquisition and management, variable data services, in-house printing and on-site mail verification by the USPS. Our friendly staff will help guide your project through the direct mail process. Plus, our in-house services keep your project on schedule while saving you time and money. We're more than a direct mail company, we're your direct mail partner.

You may contact United Printing & Mailing directly via any of the following methods:

Online:
sales@ugotmail.com
www.ugotmail.com

Mail:
4833 South 38th Street
Phoenix, AZ 85040

Phone/Fax:
602-276-6162 local
800-645-6659 toll-free
602-276-4229 fax

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Are you mailing to the right people?

When planning a direct mail campaign, most people arduously deliberate about copy, format, design, and mail schedule. While each of these points are very important to the overall success of the mailing, the most critical aspect of the mailing—your mailing list—is often given much less attention. Many people blindly use an in-house customer list that hasn't been examined in years or purchase a generic list without ever considering testing and evaluating its effectiveness. How profitable can your carefully crafted mail promotion be if its recipient isn't a qualified prospect? You must carefully plan your mailing list—it is the make-or-break factor of your mailing.

In fact, in today's penny-pinching economy, paying closer attention to your mailing list is a great way to start saving money on your mailing. Mailing to the wrong people, duplicate addresses or invalid addresses can all add up to a sizable waste of print, production and postage costs.

In order to maximize your mailing and minimize your mail costs you are going to need to put some man-power into your list, but where do you start?

The best place to start refining your mail list is by using your existing customer database to build a "client profile" of your ideal customer. Your client profile should outline things like age, income, gender, location, profession, purchase history, etc. The more information you have about who your current clients really are, the better equipped you are to start narrowing down what kinds of people are supporters and purchasers of your product. You will be able to use the client profile to edit your house mail list and aid in selection of rented or purchased lists to supplement your house list.

When your client profile is complete, you can use the criteria to evaluate and edit your existing house mail list. Do you have prior customers who don't fit your profile

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Nonprofit Nook

Transparency in our current economy

There has been a lot of buzz in the business and marketing community about the concept of "transparency." As a non-profit marketer, how can you use transparency to your advantage? In today's economy, people want to understand how their money is being used. The simplest way of implementing this tactic is to do just that—clearly and simply explain where donations are going, what are they paying for, how improvements are increasing your efficiency and touching more lives. Increased transparency will allow your donor base to connect with you on a real level and demonstrate why you are a responsible, sound place to invest their money.

Did You Know?

Your mail permit can be revoked if not used

If you currently hold your own permit, we've been alerted of a lesser-known USPS rule that you should be aware of. According to the USPS website, "to keep your permit imprint account active, you must do a bulk mailing at least once every 2 years." If you don't mail within this time frame, your account will become inactive, and you'll have to pay the application fee again to reactivate it. A simple way to avoid this problem is to use a mail vendor who allows you to use their permit on your materials. At United, we offer the use of our permit number to all of our clients so they don't have to hassle with keeping their own permit up-to-date.

For complete information see the USPS website at <http://pe.usps.com/businessmail101/postage/mailingPermit.htm>

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Featured Format

When planning your direct mail campaign, the right format makes all the difference.

Mini Booklets: An informative alternative

When thinking about direct mail formats, most marketers think about postcards and letter mailers. As we discussed a few months ago, self-mailers are also a viable direct mail format. The great thing about self-mailers are that they in themselves present so many options for variation. One of our popular self-mailer variations is the eight-page mini booklet, or “Mini-8” as we like to call it. So why could a mini booklet be right for you?

More space for information

A mini booklet gives you multiple pages to display your product or service information. You can give extensive details about your organization and what it can do for your prospect. Plus, even though we traditionally recommend focusing your mailing around one product, the expanded format of a multi-page booklet means you could even treat the booklet as a mini catalog and display several products at once.

It is an attention-getting format

The name of the game in direct mail is getting and keeping your prospect’s attention, and a mini-booklet could help you do just that. The mini booklet is a much less common format and therefore grabs your readers’ attention when it shows up in their mailbox. Plus, whether you choose to use the booklet as a mini catalog or not, it tends to immediately look like a catalog. Most people find catalogs fun to read, and will generally carve out a little more time to inspect a catalog-like mail piece.

Mail more pages for less

One of the truly beautiful things about a mini booklet is that a typical 8-page mini booklet will mail for the exact same postage rate as a standard half-folded self-mailer. This means you can double your pages—and marketing information—for the same amount of postage.

Mini booklets can be a great addition to any direct mailer’s arsenal. More page real estate and more consumer attention, all for the same postage rate as a piece half its size? Its a win-win situation!

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and haven’t responded to your advances in a while? Do you have prospects who refuse to convert to customers? After analyzing the list, don’t be afraid to trim the fat and clear your list of prospects who don’t show a real likelihood of purchasing your product. These contacts are simply robbing you of your postage dollars and pushing your response rates down. Its a waste of time and money marketing to people who clearly don’t fit into your client profile and show no signs of purchasing.

Ideally, you want to be mailing to people, not companies. Your mail list should contain an actual contact name, not just a company name. An actual contact name greatly improves that your mail piece will get into the right hands and be acted on. If you are unable to obtain contact names, you could address the piece to a specific position, such as ‘Supply Manager’ or ‘Household Shopper.’ Of course this is much less specific, but it should help in getting your mail piece into the hands of the right person.

Once your mail list is refined, it is important to make sure it stays in good shape. Your list will quickly begin to lose value if it is not maintained. You should have the list de-duped (checked for duplicate entries) and check for address validity often.

It is in your best interest to add to and validate the information in your database as often as possible through the use of mailed, emailed or phone surveys. Cross-reference this new database information against your mail list criteria and add or subtract from your mail list accordingly. The more information you have in your database, the better idea you have of your clients, which leads to higher-quality improvements in your mailing list.

After all this revision, your list will most likely end up shorter than it began. It is better to mail to a smaller, high-quality list than a large list full of prospects who will never purchase. If you are uncomfortable with the brevity of your list, you can always supplement your list with a rented or purchased list. Thanks to your new client profile, you will have a solid outline of criteria that can help you select a supplemental list. If you choose to purchase additional names to add to your house list, it is a great idea to test a small sampling of the list before purchasing and mailing to the entire list.

Your mail list is a constantly changing, growing, evolving thing. Its a tremendous company asset and the greatest factor in whether how mail promotion will perform. Be sure to give your list the attention it deserves—it’s got a big job to do.

Clear your list of prospects who don’t show a real likelihood of purchasing



Direct Mail Design Tips

Get creative with your mail panel in an automation-friendly way

Questions about mail panels are constantly buzzing around our office. What size should the panel be? Can it have a background color or pattern? Can the indicia be inside the mail panel or should it be outside of it? Is there any way to make the mail panel interfere less with the postcard design?

Throughout our years in direct mail design and production, we’ve narrowed down a few answers to these questions that will hopefully help you in your direct mail design.

How big does the mail panel need to be?

The mail panel must be a minimum of 4” wide by 2” high, and should be anchored at the right-hand side of your piece, usually towards the bottom. This room is needed in order to inkjet on the address and barcode in a font size that is readable by USPS postal equipment. By leaving this room, you ensure that your mail piece will qualify for the lowest automation rate, which could save you a lot of money. If you fail to provide enough room, your mail piece may need to be addressed using labels, which doesn’t exactly produce the most professional look, and you may be charged extra as the piece may not be able to be automated.

Can the postage be inside this 4” x 2” mail panel?

We recommend leaving the entire 4” x 2” mail panel clear for addressing, and therefore recommend moving the postage area or indicia just above the top right corner of the mail panel.

Does my mail panel have to be shaped like a rectangle?

The mail panel does not have to be rectangular in shape, but whatever shape you choose you absolutely MUST ensure that there is 4” x 2” clear of space to add the address.

Does the mail panel have to be white in color?

The mail panel does not have to be white and can be a very light tint of a color. If you choose to tint your mail panel, it should be no more than 8% screen. If the color gets darker than 8%, there is a risk that the color will get too dark and will not contrast with the address that is inkjet on. If the address does not contrast enough, it will not be able to be read by USPS equipment.

Can I put a pattern in my mail panel?

Much like the rule about color, you can use a pattern, but it must not interfere with the address or barcode area. This means it must follow the same rule of 8% tint and it should not be high in contrast or contain vertical lines that would interfere with reading the barcode.

How can I make the mail panel less interruptive to my design?

This is a popular question, and we believe that the most discreet way of formatting a mail panel is to stretch a 2” strip across the entire bottom of the piece. This method is a little more elegant and doesn’t interrupt the flow of content as much as a 4” x 2” rectangle, however you will lose a little more page real estate.

