

How To Get **More Response** *From Your Direct Mail*

By Mark Hale

Would you like your direct mail to pull better response? There are six things you should know and use in your advertising to make it more effective. Over the last 24 years I have noticed that all successful ads had some things in common.

The first thing is to understand what is the purpose of direct mail. The purpose of direct mail is to get your target market interested enough to want more information and call you. Direct mail is a direct response medium. It is not an image building medium but a direct way to create a steady flow of prospects. Very simply, use it to get prospects calling you. The next thing to understand about direct mail is how it is consumed by agents. Most people go through their mail quickly and usually over or near a trash can. Unlike with trade publications or magazines, which the reader will spend a lot more time reading, direct mail is consumed very quickly. You have at the most 1 to 3 seconds to communicate to the reader your main message.

1) Is the product or program you are offering competitive? What is unique about it? The most well conceived ad will fail if agents already have a better product or program available to them.

2) Does your ad have a clear, concise headline? The headline is the most important part of your ad. It will either attract interest or not. The headline must always contain a benefit to your target agent, never a feature. Agents respond to benefits not features.

Tip: The benefit answers the question "What's in it for me?"

3) Keep the ad simple do not over explain. The best ads tease and entice the reader. The reader wants more information and has to call you to get it. With direct mail, less is better. You only want to give them enough information to wet their appetite and make them want more.

4) Do not include a laundry list of products and programs. The most effective ads focus on one product or program and communicate it's benefits to the agents. Remember, they are going through their direct mail quickly. Ads that contain a laundry list of products or services tend to be confusing and end up in the trash unread.

5) Ask for the business. Does your ad ask agents to call you? Is the phone number printed clearly and easy to find? Is there more than one way to respond?

Tip: Do you have a live person answering the phone? People do not like going through a voice mail or leaving a message on a answering machine. The Insurance business is a high touch business. The marketer who offers a high level of personal service will win the agent over. You have spent a lot of money getting them to call you, you don't want to lose them now by having a voice mail system answer the phone.

6) Does your ad build an urgency? Does it give prospects reason and a benefit for calling you now?

If your ads contain the above six points your direct mail will be successful for you. This list should be helpful to you when you are putting together your ads and also to fix an ad that did not pull well.