

18 Secrets To Successful Direct Mail Marketing For Remodelers

There's definitely an art to direct mail marketing. Experts in the field of direct mail say 40% of your direct mail campaigns effectiveness is driven the quality of the mailing list, 40% is driven by the offer, and 20% is from the creative packaging.

The good news... once you've developed a piece that works you'll have a deadly marketing weapon nobody else has that will return low cost, high quality, non-competitive leads over and over. Leads that are just as good as a referral lead.

There are, of course, marketers who know far more about direct mail marketing techniques. But, to my knowledge, these techniques haven't been applied to the remodeling industry. So, here's a summary of 18 secrets to successful direct mail marketing for remodelers:

Secret #1: Target Your Market

It all starts with a targeted list. Quality is more important than quantity. The higher the quality your list is the higher your response rate will be. You will have more success marketing to the "cream of the crop" over and over and over again rather than marketing to everyone in your market one time. Studies show that the average consumer needs to be exposed to an advertisement 3+ times before they even think of responding. And it takes 7+ marketing impressions to gain "top of mind" awareness with a consumer.

The best list (the goldmine) is your past customer list (repeat sales). By statistic it costs 5 – 7 times more to acquire a new customer than it does to resell a past customer? Instead of thinking of customers as a one-time sale think of what the customer could be worth to you over a lifetime.

The second best list is your "old leads" who have not yet purchased (rehash marketing). Let's face it; your old leads have already admitted interest in your products/services. The average closing ratio in the remodeling industry is 30%. That means on average 70% of your leads do not purchase after the first presentation. Statistics show 60% of the unsold leads will end up purchasing a similar project from someone within one year.

The third best list is the prospects who live around a job you recently completed (radius marketing). Neighbors tend to be homogeneous in nature. The homes are of similar age and value, and the people who live there tend to have similar earnings and needs. A recent survey done by **Better Homes and Garden Magazine** revealed "Saw Similar Job by Company" was the 2nd biggest reason purchasers of remodeling projects decided on their contractor to do their project.

The fourth best list is a targeted list of homeowners, those "cream of the crop" prospects, who live in your area (targeted zip code marketing). This list should consist of homeowners who are the right age, income, home value, age of home, length of residency, etc. This is commonly referred to as a "compiled list". Compiled lists are available from Market\$harp in a format that can be easily imported into database software programs such as Market\$harp, Excel, Access, etc.

Secret #2: Put Your Sales Presentation On Paper

Usually the best way to start writing copy is to put your in-home sales presentation on paper and convert it to a sales pitch for a free in-home consultation. Remember, your selling the free in-home consultation and not the product or service. You just want to get in the door. How would you convince a stranger to let you in the door of their home if you walked up to the stranger's home and knocked on their door? What would you say?

Secret #3: Tell An Intriguing Story

Sell them, don't tell them. Your reader doesn't have the time to peruse the family history of your company's founding fathers. Sure, you can tell the company story. But you should try to phrase it in the form of a reader benefit. Example: Don't say "we've been in business for fifty years". Say, "our customers have been profiting from lower heating & cooling costs since 1952". Tell a true, intriguing, and emotional story about how you can make their life more enjoyable.

Secret #4: Get To The Point

If you dilly-dally around about telling your reader what you have to offer, you'll lose them for sure. It's best to get to the point at the very beginning. Preferably in the first five lines.

Secret #5: Don't Get Caught Up In Correct Grammar

Please don't interpret this to mean that it's alright to sound stupid. It's not. But, it is better to write like the reader reads than to write like Mrs. Jones taught you to in her eighth grade English class. Research shows that most people read at about the eighth grade level, anyway. That includes college graduates. This is advertising, generating leads and selling product or service.

Secret #6: The Offer

How important is the offer? If you look at most direct mail pieces you receive - the offer doesn't seem too important at all. Many either have no offer, a weak offer, or they hide the offer instead of making it the hero of the package. But it is the offer that can influence response to a far greater

degree than anything else. There's a rule that goes like this: If you change the creative, you can multiply response twice over. If you change the offer, you can multiply response three-fold.

The offer should be something of value. Ideally it should be something the prospect can't get anywhere else. However, the most important is this: if you can tie your offer to your main benefit it can be exponentially more effective.

Create urgency in your offer with a believable limited-time offer that has a valid reason for the offer. For example: reasons to buy now = "winter booking" program = if you help keep my work crews busy during the slow winter months then I'll provide our product/service at a discount = I just want to keep my work crews busy so they can afford to buy Christmas presents.

Secret #7: Use Headlines & Sub-headlines

Use headlines and sub headlines throughout the copy. Use "Discover How To...", "The Secrets To...", or use a testimonial for a headline. Use the headlines to grab the reader's attention and lure them into reading more.

Secret #8: Use Benefits, Not Features

Only use features if you have a benefit tied to it. For example: Feature = Low E Argon Glass vs. Benefit = lower heating & cooling costs and more disposable income to spend on your next vacation.

Secret #9: Use Testimonials

Testimonials add credibility to your story. Use a picture of the customer who gave the testimonial.

Secret #10: Always follow AIDA

This will help keep you on the right track. A) attract Attention. I) stimulate Interest. D) create Desire. A) incite Action. Do this every time on every direct mail component and you will surely succeed.

Secret #11: Use Marketing Magnets

Try using "Marketing Magnets" such as respond to this offer for a "FREE Guide On How To Select The Right Contractor". Asking for an appointment too early in the game can be a turn-off. It's tough with first-time prospects, because, like always, they are more suspicious of your motives, hate advertising, and resent you even having something they might want.

However, it's obvious that someone interested in this FREE Guide would be very likely to have an interest in your product/service. And it's very non-intrusive. Be sure to include the necessary information for the prospect call your company when the timing is right.

Secret #12: Don't Be Cheap

Don't be cheap. An inexpensive mail piece, bulk rate indicia, lack of personalization, etc. will lower your response rate. The more personalization the better your response.

Generally, the more you invest in the mailing the better your return will be. For example: if your mailing a letter to a relatively small list of prospects around an in-progress job then try hand addressing every envelope and use "live" first class stamp. This method will cost more but it adds personalization and can dramatically increase response rate. Do the "me test"... would you open a hand addressed envelope?

Secret #13: Make Multiple Marketing Impressions

Don't stop after one marketing impression. Make multiple marketing impressions to the same targeted group of prospects by sending a series of mailings, canvassing the neighborhood, using job signs, or making soft phone follow-up calls. Repetition marketing works great when the promotional messages tie in with each other and use the same theme. The cost of the marketing campaign goes up but the return on investment also goes up exponentially.

Secret #14: Be Patient

Direct mail has staying power. Just because you didn't get a response right away doesn't mean the reader didn't hold on to the mailer so they can call when the time is right.

Secret #15: Create A "Swipe File"

Every good copywriter has one. From now on, any advertisement that captures your attention should go directly into your "swipe file". You'll find these ads in magazines, newspapers, emails, websites, etc. It doesn't have to be about remodeling. It can be about golf or weight loss products but you have to interchange the word golf with free in-home consultation. Borrow from them. Steal from them. Rewrite them. And spawn ideas from them.

Secret #16: Track Your Results

Track your cost per lead, cost per sale, and your marketing cost as a percentage of gross sales. The average response rate to direct mail is 1/2% -

this statistic includes mostly mass marketers with deep pockets who blanket the entire U.S. A more targeted approach will return better results.

So, what can you expect for a return on your direct mail advertising investment? For example, let's say worst case scenario you only get ½% response on a 1,000 piece mailing. That would get you 5 new leads. The cost per lead would be approximately \$100 (1,000 x .50/mailed = \$500 / 5 leads = \$100 per lead). If you sell 2 leads your marketing cost per sale is approximately \$250 (1,000 x .50/mailed = \$500 / 2 sales = \$250 per sale). If your average sale was \$6,000 then you generated \$12,000 in sales and you're marketing cost as a percentage of gross sales is 4.2% (1,000 x .50/mailed = \$500 marketing cost / \$12,000 total sales = 4.2%).

Now, if you were in Las Vegas and every time you put \$500 in a slot machine it gave you back \$12,000 would you keep doing it? As a remodeling professional I'm sure you would love to experience these results. Most remodelers are very satisfied if they're spending at or below 12% of their gross sales on advertising/marketing. Track the results. Learn from what works and what doesn't work. Keep improving on what's working.

Secret #17: Your Copy Is Never Finished

Assume your copy is never finished. I think it was Stephen King who said, "There is no such thing as writing. There is only rewriting." Type your project into the word processor. Edit it at least once on screen. Then, print it out. Edit it at least once on paper. Then, set it aside for a day or two and go through the whole process all over again.

Secret #18: Be Persistent

Be persistent. Direct mail works. You just have to find the right combination. If you think direct mail doesn't work then why is your mailbox full of it every day?

So please, take advantage of these ideas. Implementing the **18 Secrets to Successful Direct Mail Marketing For Remodelers** will help you on your next marketing campaign: to do a better job and make more profits. At this very moment you are one mailer away from a fortune. Keep reading. Keep analyzing. Keep writing. And don't be shy to contact us. We want to hear about your success stories and perhaps share a few ideas from which we can all profit!

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