

May, 2003

## 15 Tips to Pack Punch in Postcards

**W**hile it's true that postcards are economical and have a high readership rate, many businesses stop there, forgetting that postcards can be one of their best marketing tools. Postcards come in all shapes and sizes and are made out of multiple types of materials.

According to The Do-It-Yourself Direct Mail Handbook, postcards were first introduced in Austria in 1869 as straw colored pieces of board called "Korrespondenz Karte". Seeking to be different some companies still capture this original idea by using popsicle sticks. The only limit to the creativity of postcards is your imagination and a few postal regulations.

### Advantages

Postcards offer several advantages. They enable you to write brief notes without feeling you've cheated the people you're sending them to. They can be designed in many shapes and sizes. Since they are open, they provide a high readership rate for your mailing. They also tend to be inexpensive compared to stationery or letterhead. Postcards are also very functional. One company perforated a picture postcard in the shape of the standard Rotary telephone.

### Creative Uses

**1** Introduce a new product or service  
Give your customers a glimpse of what's new. Are you offering a new product or service? Whenever you identify a product or service, provide one or two specific reasons why it will benefit your target customer. If you can't think of one, rethink your strategy.

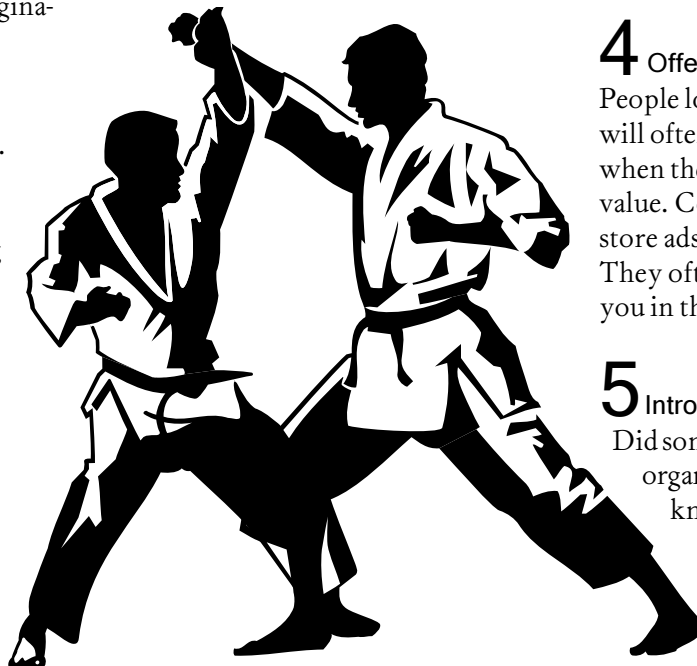
**2** Offer Coupons  
One of the best ways to track direct mail and what works best is to attach a postcard to any direct mailing. You

may also want to send some stand alone postcard coupons. The most important thing with coupons is making sure your offer is something your customer really wants.

**3** Announce a Sale or Event  
Having an anniversary or birthday? Did you just get recognized by your trade? Having a sale? All of these can be announced through postcards. Since postcards don't require opening and pass through the hands of several people, your message is more likely to be seen than it is with direct mail letters.

**4** Offer Something for Nothing  
People love to see the word FREE and will often make a larger purchase when they think they're getting added value. Consider all the department store ads you hear or see in the paper. They often offer some incentive to get you in the store.

**5** Introduce a New Employee  
Did someone recently join your organization? Let your customers know who it is and what expertise and experience that person brings with him/her.



## 6 Spread Good News

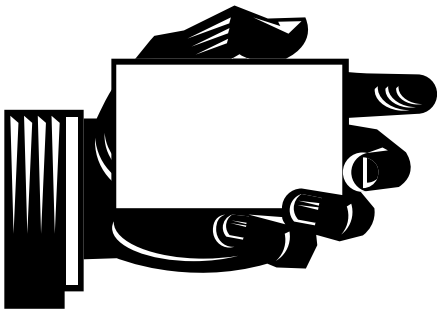
Share a success story. Have you gotten press coverage of a product or event? Copy headlines and articles and then reduce them so that the front of the postcard looks like a background of newsprint with a collage of several stories. You could also choose the best headline and reduce it so that the front side of the postcard looks like a miniature newspaper. On the back you could share a success story, a fact mentioned in one of the articles or a testimonial from a satisfied customer.

## 7 Build Traffic at Meetings, Seminars and Trade Shows

Many organizations generate new business at meetings, seminars and trade shows. Yet many companies fail when it comes to follow up mailings for these events. Instead of having people drop their business cards into a fishbowl, why not have them drop a pre-addressed postcard with their name and address into a box. That way when the event is over or a few days later, you can drop the postcards directly in the mail. If you need to capture telephone numbers too, you can always have people hand you a business card while using a postcard to try to win something.

## 8 Make Ordering Simple

Looking for more orders and more appointments? An order card containing a basic inventory of items that customers usually order can spark customers memories and help them stay current with their office needs. If you're seeking more appointments



with existing customers, consider how often they hear from you. Receiving postcards periodically can jog your customers' minds and remind them to keep regular appointments.

## 9 Appointment Meeting Reminders or Confirmation

Wondering how you can find out who will be at a meeting? Wishing you could stop dealing with no-shows? Both of these issues are addressed when organizations use postcards for reminders.

## 10 Use it as a Special Event Invitation

Many people know that direct mail is important, yet few understand its value when it comes to events. By using postcards for invitations, you extend the run and are able to get your message to several key media.

## 11 Celebrate Birthdays and Anniversaries

Postcards are a great way for you to show your customers that you care about them and their special day(s). The more recognizable the front (e.g. Snoopy) of the postcard, the more likely it will be read.

## 12 Say Thanks

Recognize your clients by sending them a postcard thanking them for their contribution. Have you received media coverage recently? Take the opportunity to thank your customers for making your business so successful. You can reduce the articles so they fit on one side of a postcard. Then print a banner across the articles that says "Thanks!" or "Thanks for making us a success!"

## 13 Requests for More Information

Generate more business by providing a card on which individuals can request more information. You can distribute these cards at chamber

mixers and trade shows, through direct mail and at your office.

## 14 Feedback cards (comments, suggestions, surveys)

Make it easy for customers to tell you what they think. Customers will be loyal to companies that care about them. A great example is Nordstrom. Many people shop there because they know Nordstrom will take care of them. If there is a problem, Nordstrom will fix it. Many times you'll discover important observations from feedback postcards. Sometimes your customers ideas will bring you extra money.

## 15 Ask for Referrals

One of the best ways to increase sales is by selling to your associates' friends. People want to work with a business they trust. Consequently, they are more likely to choose a company based on the recommendation of people they trust.

Now that you've considered the advantages of postcards and 15 ways to use them, think about the creative touches you can add. One clever idea is to send a direct mailing with puzzle pieces. When the puzzle is assembled it says, puzzled about xyz? Call us at... Such ideas intrigue customers and cause them to take a second look at your company.

Have you had a company event lately? Get color copies of some of the good photos and make them into postcards. A variation of this might be a card that says you've been inducted as a VIP of XYZ company, featuring a picture of your customer holding an Oscar or surrounded by an Oscar themed border. By using a little thought, you can come up with ideas that will generate interest and increase sales for your company.

# The Idea Corner



If you are mailing a business reply postcard to your customers, size is an important issue to consider. The size of the card will determine whether your postcard can be processed automatically. Automatic processing is important, because it may mean the difference between the cards being returned to you or not!

A Business Reply Mail postcard must be rectangular, have straight edges, and fit within the standard dimensions for BRMs. The standard dimensions for business reply postcards range from a minimum height of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches high to a maximum of  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches high and a minimum of 5

## Business and Courtesy Reply Mail Size Requirements

inches long to a maximum of 6 inches long. Any postcard smaller than the minimum height or length is not mailable.

The minimum thickness of a business reply card is .007 inches and the maximum thickness is .0095 inches. You should use card stock with a basis weight of at least 75 pounds. It is recommended that you use a thickness greater than the minimum.

If your card exceeds  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches high or of 6 inches long or .0095 inches thick, it is mailable, but it will be charged at the regular First-Class rate for letters.

Business Reply Mail requires postage to be paid by you, the sender, if your

customer mails the reply back to you. This kind of mail works best when your customer needs a little extra inducement to reply. The customer does not have to pay postage, does not have to put an address on the mailpiece, and does not have to supply a card or envelope.

If your customer's response is assured, such as for billing, but you want to make it easier for them (and probably get your response more quickly) you may want to send a Courtesy Reply Mail card. These cards are preprinted with your company name and address, your barcode and the Courtesy Reply Mail FIM code, and note in the upper right hand corner reminding the customer to add postage.

# WORDS

A Vocabulary  
Of The Graphic Arts

**barcode** – A series of vertical full bars and half bars representing ZIP Code information relative to the address on the mailpiece.

**basis weight** – The weight in pounds of a ream (500 sheets) of paper cut to a specified standard 'parent' size for that grade. For Business Reply Postcards, the basis

weight requirement is 75 pounds (25 inches by 38 inches by 500 sheets).

**bulk mail** – Mailings that require special preparation: presorting and bundling, so that it may bypass some handling stages in the delivery process. These mailings are sent at discounted bulk rates.

**business reply mail (BRM)** – Specially printed cards, envelopes, cartons and labels that may be mailed without prepayment of postage. The postage and fees are collected when the mail is delivered back to the sender. This service enables mailers to receive

First Class Mail without postage, back from customers by paying the postage and fees on receipt of the mailpieces.

**direct mail** – Advertisements, solicitations, etc. mailed directly to a large number of individuals.

**facing identification mark (fim)** – A pattern of vertical bars printed in the upper right portion of the mailpiece just to the left of the indicia, used to identify business reply mail and certain other barcoded mail. The FIM is an orientation mark for automated facing and cancelling equipment.

# Tricks & Tips

**S**ometimes we have customers come in saying they want an 8 x 10 postcard because they really want their card to stand out. Unfortunately, we have to tell them to check with the local postal business center. The business centers provide guidelines for all types of mailings. Besides providing you with templates, they'll also help you by discussing your piece or reviewing it for you so that you don't waste valuable time having your mailing piece redesigned.

In the case of an 8 x 10 postcard, there would be extra postage required because of the large size. If instead you went a little smaller to a 6 x 8 or less,

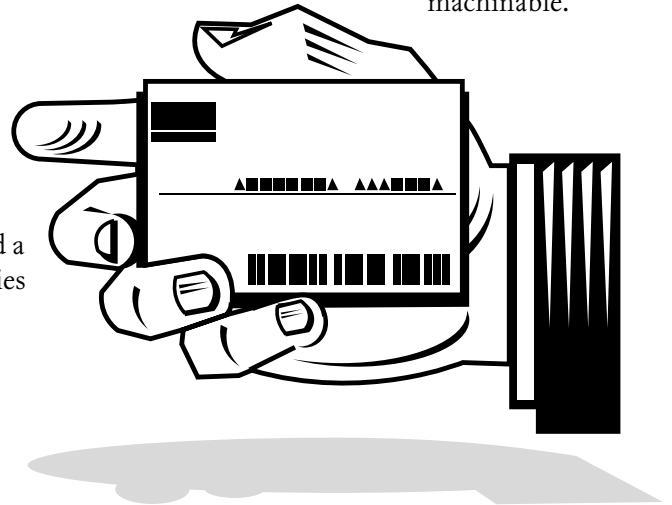
you could receive substantial savings. Another way to save is by waiting until you have enough postcards to do a bulk mailing. Sometimes you may not have enough to qualify as a bulk mailing and you'll have to get your mailing out anyway.

Another thing that is important to check is the FIM marks and bar codes. When companies sign up for a permit to do direct mail, they will be assigned a special bar code that applies to their business reply account.

If you're not sure whether or not your piece qualifies for discounts, you can

## Get Your Postcard from Point A to Point Z

bring it to a postal business center for an evaluation. They will let you know where everything needs to be placed on the card, how much postage will be required and anything else it will take to make your piece readable and machinable.



# Q&A

Questions And Answers

At the end of a recent trade show I was handed a receipt tape holding the names of more than 100 people who wanted more information about our business. Transcribing all those names and addresses for mailing labels took forever. Isn't there a better way of capturing names?

**A** common trick to collect names at trade shows is to invite people to drop their business cards into a fishbowl to try to

win something. This always leaves prospects searching for business cards if they even take the time to stop, and leaves you with the job of transcribing all the information which can sometimes take quite a while. Next time, why not provide prospects with a pre-stamped postcard? Simply have them fill out the address part of the postcard and hand it back to you.

Whether it's bridal shower thank you notes or a trade show follow up, pre-stamped postcards will help you get your mail out quickly. Need to do follow up mailings for a committee meeting? Bring pre-stamped postcards with you.

What if you need to do more than one follow up mailing? In this case you may want to have individuals fill out mailing labels and copy your first set of labels onto additional pieces of label stock. Here again, most of the work is already done for you. If you're going to copy address labels, make sure your original labels are written in black or dark blue ink.

Business cards still work the best for getting phone numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses. Using a little creativity you could develop a popular fax postcard or e-mail postcard campaign.