

Direct-Mail Tips

Creativity often distinguishes between a successful leader and a follower. Even though newspaper, radio, TV, billboard, Yellow Pages and magazines are viable options for you to advertising your art supply business, direct mail marketing remains one of the most successful options in our very competitive marketplace. With creativity on your side, it is time to become the leader and to be unique in producing your strategic direct mail marketing campaigns.

As we all know, advertising remains a very large and important investment for marketing the complete benefits of your art supply store. Take the time to investigate the best options to make your complete advertising, marketing and public relations programs work best for you. Direct mail can be facilitated independently with direct mail houses, local printers as well as through nationally recognized direct mail resources that are available in most major communities across America.

Steve Zuckerman, president of Clipper Magazine, a direct mail advertising magazine, suggests the following guidelines and strategies to help your future direct mail marketing campaigns be more successful.

Getting started

Your direct mail marketing campaign should share the benefits of how your small shop or large art supply business is still a current and valuable option. Regardless of your variety of art supplies, direct mail can also be the most efficient way to promote your business name and help to find new patrons.

One great way to get started is to get

your customers to fill out surveys selecting their favorite types of products as well as their favorite advertising media. Have your customers write down their names, mailing addresses, birth dates and e-mail addresses on the survey for monthly or seasonal prize drawings. The winners could receive a discount on their next paint supplies, fine art framing or palette knife purchases. This not only utilizes the "free" and "discount" aspect that we will cover later but gathers a list of clients to begin your campaign. You can use

"Direct mail marketing offers art supply retailers the unique opportunity for the most effective and measurable advertising results."

this valuable information for future direct mail devices and your e-mail blasts. Knowing your client's favorite products and brands may have many advantages for you. Stating their favorite brand name on a coupon or a gift certificate may lure them in to check out other items.

Sculpting your direct mail marketing plan

As most consumers read advertisements, they search for exciting colorful photographs, headlines, offers and logos. Here are a few ways to boost your direct mail without even lifting a brush.

Consider your best direct mail options. Today, you can work with letters, postcards, inserts, detached address label cards, coupon envelopes and full-



color direct mail magazines. If you elect to go with solo direct mail formatted letters, postcards and catalogs, it will cost you from 50 cents to \$1 or more per targeted buyer. You can use your own database or purchase a list of names from a local list supplier. That route will be very costly.

You can also consider direct mail magazines and envelopes, where your costs will drop dramatically to 4 cents per home. With most of these resources, you will be able to mail to 10,000 to 50,000 or more designated neighborhoods surrounding your art supply store. Some of the best-known national resources today are Clipper Magazine, Savvy Shopper and Mint Magazines, while Val Pak, Money Mailer and others are known as alternative regional direct mail coupon formats. The magazine formats are more upscale and usually will have a longer shelf life.

Portray a clear message

A strong direct mail advertising campaign needs to be ongoing throughout the year. It's good to be clever with your headlines, yet be careful. Don't get so cute that the prospective clients do not easily know what you offer. After placing a strong photograph, headline and logo, be sure to consider adding a brief bullet point listing of your specialized products and services. This should include extras like a list of your special namebrand products, bulk packaging services and gift certificates.

Consistency is an extremely important factor. Maintain a very consistent visual image for your art supply business throughout all of your integrated print, broadcast and direct mail advertising campaigns.

Display full-color photographs

Most fine artists, graphic designers, architects, hobbyists and consumers are very visual. If you do not have color photographs of your own paint brushes, easels, palette knives and other art materials, you can purchase stock photographs. You can also work with your distributors and manufacturers to see what is available. Your direct mail services may also have a wonderful library of photographs that they can share with you.

Avoid most black-and-white marketing options. Direct mail research has repeatedly shown that full-color advertising options can actually increase redemption rates by 30% to 60%.

Nothing beats "FREE"

It can surely help to persuade current customers to try new products as well as draw new customers. Consider offering a "Buy One – Get One FREE" art supply gift certificate or coupon, or "Buy Any Sketchpad – Get a FREE Pencil Set." Your art supply customers will also react better to strong dollars off discounts and incentives.

Percentage discounts are not perceived to be as strong, especially if they are only 10 to 20 percent off. Unless you can offer a bigger discount, say 50 percent off, your discount will be perceived as weak and eventually be ignored. You can offer '\$5 OFF – Any \$20 or More Purchase'.

Disclaimers and expiration dates

Set 60- to 90-day expiration dates to allow clients enough time to take advantage of your offers while still giving them a time limit. You may also want to say, "One Per Person" and "No Double

Discount." Avoid excessive disclaimers and negative limitation notes.

Painting your goals

Like any advertising, promotion and marketing, direct mail requires a long-term investment to see the results you want. Sit down with your direct mail consultant to set goals, tell them exactly what you are looking for. Some direct mail magazine resources offer complimentary marketing consultations, artwork and the use of professional photographs, mailing lists, printing and postage.

Track your success

The best part of direct mail marketing is that you will be able to quickly track the results, as each coupon or gift certificate is presented for your discounted offers. Clients will need to bring in their advertisements, postcards, letters, coupons or mini gift certificates in order to take advantage of your promotions. You will be able to measure your total sales volume each month, especially on the retail products that you are promoting with your direct mail efforts. Be assured that many new clients will respond to your direct mail advertising devices without actually bringing in the coupons.

Direct mail works

Direct mail marketing offers art supply retailers the unique opportunity for the most effective and measurable advertising results. It's time to promote your art materials shop with valuable and effective direct mail advertising investments that will really work to build sales with a quality image while also building your name in the local community.

For a complimentary direct mail advertising consultation or more information about Clipper Magazine resources near you, call 866-802-1429 email marketresearch@clippermagazine.com or visit their web site at www.ClipperMagazine.com.

