

Here is how to write and design winning retail ads to generate unlimited bundles of cash.

CREATIVE INVESTIGATION

First how are you positioning your product?

1. Who are you talking to? People most likely to buy or repurchase
2. What do you want them to do? Buy again, buy more, and come in.
3. How will you persuade them to do it? Make your offer irresistible.

Here's How To Create Irresistible Offers:

Jim Kobs, author of Profitable Direct Marketing has a checklist of proven direct response offers. He also recommends to feature your offer prominently in your ad and if its a FREE OFFER, make sure it is played up strong in your headline or subhead, not buried in the copy.

Here are a few of his proven offers that apply to retailers:

1. Free trial
2. Installment terms
3. Free gift for order, inquiry or trial
4. Free demonstration
5. Cash discount
6. Introductory order discount
7. Short term introductory discount
8. Price increase notice
9. Free samples
10. Guarantee
11. Piggyback offers
12. Add on offer
13. Lucky number sweepstakes
14. Everyone wins sweepstakes
15. Trade in offer

What About Couponing?

Couponing is still big business in the U.S. Unfortunately, when companies get involved in couponing wars it destroys loyalty and everyone suffers. Besides coupon offers, you can use other strategies to sell your products and services, without discounting.

1. Quality - mention specifics and proof. Show testimonials of happy customers.
2. Variety - show your customers that you are customer oriented and you stock what they request.
3. Delivery - if possible, offer free delivery.
4. Personality - Personalize your store with pictures of employees.
Reward employees for building business relationships with customers.
Guarantee your products and service.

5. Premiums - Give away premiums with your name on it. This builds awareness while rewarding the customer at the same time.

Tips for writing Effective Copy

1. Promise benefits in your headline
2. Appeal to the customers needs for:
 - a. pleasure
 - b. appetite
 - c. convenience
 - d. attractiveness
 - e. health
 - f. money
 - g. popularity
3. Turn selling points into benefits, then give the benefit of the benefit.
4. Support claims with proof (testimonials, sales records)
5. Be enthusiastic and positive about your products, services and the future.
6. Be clear and logical
7. Include useful information, address, phone, hours, map, directions, email, web site
8. Don't be funny. People react to humor in different ways
9. Use effective, persuasive words in your headlines like you, free, now, announcing, guaranteed, save, easy, win.
10. Write in the present tense as if you were writing to a personal friend.
11. Use testimonials
12. Use buzzwords that reflect your knowledge of your customers.

How to Design More Effective Ads

1. Know your market. For upscale offers use plenty of white space.
Discount offers, can fill up the page with type and graphics
2. Put your main offer in the headline or subhead.
3. Use a typeface that reflects the image you want and don't use too many in the same ad.
4. Keep it simple, don't confuse people with complicated percentages and restrictions.
5. Use your name and logo prominently.
6. Make it easy for the reader to respond.
7. Use mini headlines, bullets and tags to break up copy.
8. Use graphics or pictures to invite the reader in or through the copy.
9. Know your colors. Consumers are attracted to certain colors.
 - a. Red - Recall and Action
 - b. Yellow - Eye Catching and Happiness
 - c. Green - Stable, reassuring and secure
 - d. Blue - Soothing, quiet, cool and orderly. Not good if you want people to concentrate.

Use these colored paper stocks when you want to take advantage of the unique attractions certain colors create. A study was done in Cleveland, Ohio by a quick printer who tested different color reply cards for his in house self mailers. Of all the colored post cards, pink pulled the best!

Test your color instincts and find out what works best for you.

10. When using reply cards, make sure you don't get fancy and use slick paper or reverses.
(Its impossible to write on a black background.)
11. Leave enough space for the customer to write down information.
12. When designing a folded mailer, line up the inside type with the address side of the fold, where most people open their mail.
13. If you want your reader to cut a coupon, border it with dashed lines.
14. Don't use large blocks of paragraph text. Keep it 4 to 5 lines.

HOW TO ACHIEVE BETTER RESPONSE RATES

These strategies of do's and don't's have been culled from many sources including years of testing elements of direct mail packages. Some may not be appropriate for every situation. You should use them as a guide, not a rule set in stone. The main thing is to keep on testing and see what works for you.

1. Use short words, 5 letters or less.
2. Personalization dramatically increases response.
3. Eliminating a return address on an envelope does NOT usually increase response.
4. Use of teaser copy on outside of envelope or self mailer MAY increase response.
5. A letter with a brochure or insert will usually increase response over a brochure or flyer by itself.
6. Copy should be as long as necessary to sell your product or message. Don't be afraid of long copy. If it's interesting people will read it and respond.
7. Write as if you were talking to your friend one on one.
8. Mail as often as your return on investment exceeds the cost of mailing.
9. Make sure your letter looks typed, not typeset. Use the Courier or Times typeface on your favorite word processor or desktop publishing program.
10. Highlight with underlines, bold, writing in the columns and spacing.

Allan Katz is The Loyalty Coach whose mission is to coach retail, service and small businesses how to get all the customers they need and keep them coming back.

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