

15 Copywriting Secrets For Direct Mail and Email Success

SUREFIRE TACTICS FOR CAPTURING YOUR CUSTOMERS' ATTENTION.

CAPTURING YOUR PROSPECT'S attention has become harder by an order of magnitude. The Internet is largely responsible for this shift. The diversity and volume of information available, many times without cost, has cut into publishers' revenues and circulation.

Here are 15 classic and contemporary creative strategies that can boost your results.

- 1. Build your advertising around one idea.** Every promotion should have one clear concept or big idea that is easy to grasp and understand. Your prospect has neither the time nor inclination to sort through and process a multitude of sales themes. Strive for a single coherent message and reinforce it.
- 2. Make your promotion itself valuable.** A prospect is more likely to keep your mailing if it contains genuinely valuable content. The information could be short (a recipe in an acquisition package for a cooking magazine) to lengthy (new results in a magalog for a health publication). Both give the prospect an instant reward just for reading them and cut through the clutter of competing mailers.
- 3. Play off the news.** If something is in the news, your prospect is probably thinking about it and has feelings. Your promotion can leverage that connection as a way to enter the conversation in their head, start at a common point and build on it.
- 4. Don't convince. Channel.** A common mistake is trying to bring prospects around to you. It has been said that desire can't be created, only channeled. Start where your prospects already are and channel those feelings and beliefs to your sales message, not the other way around.
- 5. Appeal to their better nature.** People like to think the best of themselves. Talk to them as if they already are the people they aspire to be and let your copy reflect this.
- 6. Sell on proof.** To combat intense skepticism takes hard evidence of your sales promises. Give your promotion substance and power by using specifics, case studies, testimonials, endorsements, demonstrations—any authoritative validation.

7. Research. Do what Method actors do when they take on a role: Get into the skin of your prospects. See the world through their eyes. Research will help you discover their problems, fears and frustration—which your publication can satisfy.

8. Consider a credentializing pre-head for your e-promo.

This is a short piece of copy that appears above the main headline, usually in smaller type. The pre-head lets you introduce a proof element and establish credibility before your formal sales message begins.

9. Tell a story. Stories have a universal appeal that cut across age groups, gender, economic backgrounds, everything. People relate to other people or to tales of human interest. Because of their charm, narratives aren't perceived as "selling" and allow you to slip past your prospects' defenses.


10. Be an advocate. Establish a common enemy and then position your spokesperson or publication as a fighter on behalf of your readers. It's a subtle way to build rapport that dramatically shortens the emotional distance between you and your prospect. It actually puts you on the same side. In publishing, you don't sell a subscription. You really sell a relationship.

11. Admit a (modest) flaw. Prospects are naturally skeptical of those who don't own up to the occasional mistake. Highlighting a minor flaw in your spokesperson or publication enhances your credibility, but don't go overboard in emphasizing it.

12. Focus on the future. Too many promotions talk about articles and features and editorial items that have already appeared. Past content is of no help to the prospect. On the other hand, romancing upcoming features—things the prospect will surely get—is a powerful incentive to subscribe.

13. Make the price relative. Compare the price of your publication to the service or experience it provides and the price will look like a bargain. For more impact, break it down in days and compare it to the daily price of an ordinary item which the prospect already buys, such as a cup of coffee for \$4.

14. Dramatize the guarantee. Instead of tacking it on almost as an afterthought, embody it with a bold, *specific* promise that shows the guarantee in action.

15. Use urgency two ways. First, explain how the content in your publication can't be found anywhere else. Second, come up with a plausible reason your terms and offer are for a limited time only. Bonus: A countdown clock in an online promotion is a visceral way to intensify the imperative to act. 

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