

101 ways

**to improve
your response**

By
Alan Rosenspan

Dear Reader,

Alan Rosenspan & Associates has created, evaluated and reviewed thousands of direct marketing packages for companies around the world.

They have included American Express, A&T, Capital One, Dale Carnegie Training, IBM, J.P. Morgan, MBNA, Oreck, Scotts LawnService, Sybase, Travelers Insurance, The Boston Celtics, and dozens of smaller clients.



Along the way – and at great cost – we've learned the big driving factors that most influence response, and all the little techniques you can use to improve it.

In this booklet, we'd like to share some of those lessons with you.

Advertising legend David Ogilvy used to say that the difference between a great surgeon and a good surgeon has nothing to do with their hands.

A great surgeon knows more than other surgeons.

We hope this booklet helps make you a better direct marketer, and that you find these ideas and suggestions useful and valuable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'R' followed by a horizontal line that tapers off to the right.

Alan Rosenspan

P.S. After you've reviewed these 101 ways, please visit our website at www.alanrosenspan.com for additional ideas and suggestions.

The 7 Most Important Factors

You've been charged with doing a direct marketing program. It may involve direct mail, e-mail, direct response advertising or even DRTV.

And you'll be judged – not on how attractive it looks, or whether or not it is well-written – but whether or not it works. What can you do to make sure you get a good response?

1. Target the right people

You don't want to try to sell lawn mowers to people who live in apartments. It's not only a waste of time and money – it can have a demoralizing effect on your sales force.

You need to make sure you are mailing to a list of “most likely” prospects. One of the rules of direct marketing is that your *next* customer will look a lot like your *last* customer.

2. You need a big idea

David Ogilvy said, “Unless your advertising is based on a big idea, it will pass like a ship in the night.” In direct marketing, that ship will sink.

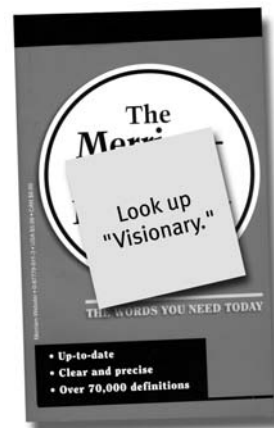
A big idea is something that will stop people – and get them to think. It is sometimes about the product. It is often about the prospect or customer.

For an e-marketing company called BeNOW, we wanted to do something dramatic to create awareness and generate leads.

Our idea was to mail marketing directors a box. The outside of the box read “We'd like to have a word with you.” Inside the box was a dictionary with a yellow post-it note on top. The note said – “Look up ‘Visionary.’”

When the prospect turned to that page, they found their name listed in the definition!

Before you send out your next direct mail package or e-mail – ask yourself, “What's the big idea?” If it doesn't immediately come through, you may want to re-think it.



3. Make them an offer they can't refuse

Remember the movie, "The Godfather?" Don Vito Corleone says, "I'll make them an offer they can't refuse." This should be the goal of your direct marketing.

The offer is not the fact that you have low prices or exceptional service. The offer is the *extra something* that gets people to fill out the coupon, go to your website, visit your store, or call your 800 number.

For a software company, we offered a free box of Dilbert mints. Most of our prospects had never even heard of them.

We received so many responses, we had to stop the program.



4. Add value

Imagine if you opened a Fortune Cookie, and the message was "Try our delicious desserts." You'd feel cheated. It's supposed to be about you – not them. The same is true of your direct mail package. It should be about the prospect and not just the product.

5. Credibility is key

Even if you're IBM, you need to prove your points and establish your claims – with specific facts, examples, and case-histories. We also recommend using testimonials and client lists.

6. Testing pays

We've seen one package outpull another package by 7 to 1. Some of our clients *would no longer be in business* had they not tested and found better ways to do direct marketing.

Testing isn't just a way to keep score – *it can help predict the future*. It shows what worked, what didn't, and where is the best place to invest your marketing budget going forward.

7. Use experts

Every time you send out a direct marketing package or even an e-mail, *you are sending a sample of your company*.

You may think it's just direct mail – but it may be the only part of your company that someone will actually hold in their hands. You may think it's just e-mail – but you'd be amazed at how easy it is to offend a customer.

Before you trust your valued customers or your valuable prospects to an agency or freelancer, make sure they know what they're doing.

101 Ways to Improve Your Response

The Outer Envelope

1. Put a strong message on the outer envelope.

Some direct marketing professionals recommend a “blind” envelope. The evidence proves otherwise. The book *Million Dollar Mailings* features 71 of the most successful direct mail packages of all time. Almost without exception, they each have a strong message on the outer envelope.

2. Use the back of the envelope.

It's 50/50 that the envelope will arrive face-up on the kitchen table or the desk. Why not use the back to further entice the prospect to open the envelope?

3. Ask a provocative question.

One of the world's best copywriters, Bill Jaymee, created a famous outer envelope for the magazine *Psychology Today*. He wrote, “Do you close the bathroom door, even if you're the only one at home?”



4. Highlight the offer.

If you have an irresistible offer, don't run the risk of someone missing it. Put it right on the outer envelope, and include a graphic of it.

5. Put the prospect's name on the outer envelope.

Not just to address the envelope, but to get their attention. We developed a mailing for Bay State Gas that targets people who have oil burners. The outer envelope looks like it's smudged with soot. It says, “Hey, Alan Rosenspan, are you still using that dirty old oil burner?”

6. Put their name in more than one place.

Apple sent me a terrific mailing addressed to: “Alan Rosenspan, Art Director. Alan Rosenspan, Account Executive. Alan Rosenspan, Media Director.” They wanted to make the point that their computers could be used for a lot of different tasks.

7. Test Fedex.

It can be expensive, but nothing has a better opening rate. One caveat, however. Make sure you explain why you needed to send this urgently.

8. Test *faux* fedex.

Response Mailers is a company that offers dozens of different outer mailing devices that look extremely important. You can even come up with your own “Express gram.” All for a fraction of the cost of Federal Express.

9. Test a stealth envelope.

When you are mailing to your existing customers, try putting just your name and logo on the outer envelope. It could be a bill or an important message. They *have* to open it.

10. Use a dimensional package.

Boxes always get opened. *Always*. Just make sure to include your name and company very prominently. On the other hand, I’ve never had much success with tube mailings. Once you open them, they tend to be hard to read.

11. Put a pen in the package.

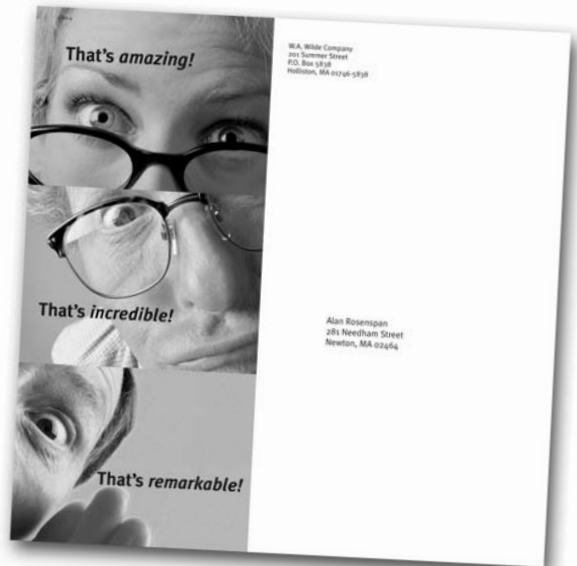
At AT&T, we tested including a pen in a package versus the same package with no pen. We increased response about 50%. Bics are cheap.

12. Put a puzzle in the package.

One of my clients is a software company called The MathWorks. They mail to engineers. They’ve found that putting a clever puzzle in the package increases response significantly. And they put their name on it, so they get more exposure when it’s passed around the office.

13. Make your envelope stand out.

The average American receives 10 direct mail packages a day. Many of us receive much, much more. So don't look at your envelope up on the wall; look at it alongside a pile of direct mail.



14. Add color to your envelope.

Many companies spend a fortune on color photography on their brochures. But some prospects never even open the envelope and get to see it.

15. Version your envelope to your list.

Nothing will get a prospect to open it quicker than if it's obviously for them. For example, "Inside: a special offer for Creative Directors." How could I resist opening it?

16. Test unusual envelopes.

We used a mock Inter-Office envelope for AT&T Alliance teleconferencing; a paper bag for the "Direct Marketing on a Shoestring" Award show; a clear poly bag for another client.

17. Make it larger

Try putting your best-performing package in a larger envelope. You can go from a #10 to #12 or even to a 9 X 12 inch envelope. I have never seen a larger size fail to outperform a smaller size. You could even go to extremes and...

18. Dominate the mail.

DHL in New Zealand sent prospects the world's largest direct mail package-an envelope over 3 feet by 2 feet. Think of ways to make your package the most intriguing, the most provocative, the most unusual one that your prospect will receive that week.

The Letter

19. Always include a letter.

I have never seen a self-mailer beat a letter package. Ogilvy & Mather Direct did research and discovered that the letter is most important part of any direct mail package, hands down. I believe it.

20. Make the letter *look* like a letter.

A letter is not a design project. Too many letters look like flyers or even brochures. It should look like a personal one-to-one communication.

21. Make the letter *sound* like a letter.

A letter should be personal, private, even intimate. It should be written in a different voice than the brochure. Think about it – it's the only kind of advertising you will ever write or even read that starts with the word "Dear."

22. Tell me a story.

The famous Wall Street Journal letter opens with a compelling story about two young men. One becomes the president of his company, one the manager of a small group. What made the difference? *The Wall Street Journal*. This letter has been responsible for over one billion dollars worth of subscriptions-more than \$1,000,000 a word!

23. Focus on the *prospect* – not the product.

It doesn't matter if you're selling gourmet coffee, satellites or super computers-people would rather read about what you can do for them than about your product or service.

24. Write the letter in the first person.

Our control package for winning customers back to AT&T began as follows: "Dear Name, I love a challenge. As the President of AT&T Consumer Long Distance Services, I face them every day. And that's why I'm writing you." It won back over 1.2 million customers without an offer.

25. Start the letter with a short sentence.

The easier you make it to begin reading, the more likely they'll continue reading. A heavy block of copy at the beginning of the letter makes it look like too much work to read.

26. Version your letter to your list.

The most successful seminar package I've ever done had four different versions of the letter. One to past attendees, one to no-shows, one to people who had inquired about our products, and one to customers. The message was slightly different to each. The letter is also the easiest and least expensive element to version.

27. Add a Johnson Box.

The Johnson box is the headline on top of the letter. It can include the main benefit or highlight the offer. The research that I've seen shows that letters with a Johnson Box outpull the same letters without by as much as 40%.

28. Treat the reader as a valued customer.

One of our most successful packages for AT&T Winback had this as a Johnson Box: "A very special offer for our most valuable former customers." It worked so well, we tested it on lower value customers. Did it do as well? *It did even better.*

29. Be sincere.

Forget using jargon or snappy sales talk. Avoid acronyms. A letter should be a one-to-one communication from one individual to another. If it doesn't sound sincere, it probably won't work.

30. Add a powerful P.S.

The P.S. is still one of the first things people read. Use it to highlight the offer, or remind readers of the main benefit of your product. You can also use it to version your letter.

31. Start the letter with a provocative question.

A great letter for Amore catfood began: "You're on a luxury cruise liner in the Caribbean. A wave smashes over the deck, washing your husband and your cat overboard. Who would you save first?"

32. Make your letter longer.

How long should a letter be? There's only one answer—*as long as it's interesting*. Remember that you're not talking to everyone, you're trying to find the 5% of your list that will truly be interested in your product or service. An Ogilvy & Mather letter for the QE2 World Cruise went to 17 pages before response started to fall off.

33. Involve the reader.

By asking questions, by making them imagine things, by testing them. Remember the quote: "Tell me and I'll forget. Show me and I'll remember. Involve me and I'll understand."

34. Feature a great quote.

Whether it's a testimonial about your product, or a great thought that's relevant to your message. Our most successful package for The Private Bank of Boston had several testimonials from customers. One said "With the Private Bank, I have clout."

35. Use a larger typeface.

Over half of all adults wear glasses. Even more as they get older. Yet even the American Association of Retired People uses small type. Make sure you use a large, easy-to-read typeface – at least 11 points, and use a type face with a serif.

36. Have the letter come from the President.

The fact that he or she is writing will alert the reader that this is an important letter. Plus most readers are flattered. (See #24)

37. Put the offer higher up in the letter.

Some writers treat the offer like a punchline to a joke. They save it for last. Make sure your offer is in the Johnson Box, or at very least, in the first three sentences of the letter. It's the direct marketing equivalent of "Show me the money!"

38. Ask for the order more than once.

Any salesperson knows to ask for the order at least three times. Why should your letter work any less? You will improve response if you tell people exactly what you want them to do, and ask them more than once.

39. Add a yellow Post-it note.

It improved response for some of my clients by over 10%. You can even personalize them, and place them on any part of the package. One technique is to put a yellow Post-it note on a page that seems to be ripped out of a magazine. I received one for a diet workshop that said this: "Alan, try this. It really works!" It was "signed" J.

40. Give them a way to respond in the letter.

If letters are so important – and they are – why force a reader to turn to another element to find your 800 number? I usually put it in both the body of the letter and the P.S. and I make it bold.

41. Underline the most important benefit.

Too much underlining and your message gets lost. Try underlining a single element of your letter, such as the offer or the key benefit. The reader's eye will automatically be drawn to it.

42. Tell them what happens if they don't act now.

Will I miss getting a raise or promotion? Will my garden wilt and die? Sometimes the negative is even more persuasive than the positive. I did an extremely successful package for a software company with the following outer headline, "ISO 9000. Will your company fail?" It outpulled upbeat mailings.

43. Include a holiday or seasonal message.

Anything that helps make the letter “real” and not just advertising will increase response. If you’re mailing during a holiday season, why not test wishing people a happy holiday? You can also use the seasons in a different way. Our most successful sale for Toro snow blowers came in the middle of August. With the temperature in the 90’s, the commercial really got people’s attention.

44. Get emotional.

A recent subscription mailing for *BusinessWeek* included two stickers. One said, “Yes, I want what I’m entitled to!” The other said, “No, give all my benefits to someone else!” If *BusinessWeek* can add emotion – you probably can too.

45. Tell them how many other people have responded.

One of our control letters for AT&T read as follows: “Even without the special offer I’m about to present to you, over 10,000 people have come back to AT&T this week alone.” Makes the prospect feel – I’m in good company.

46. Write to only one person.

Try to picture that person in your mind. It could be your spouse, your boss, your competitor. Your letter shouldn’t be a speech, it should be a one-to-one communication, even if it’s being mailed to a million people.

47. Include the word “you” as often as possible.

This helps you stay focused on the prospect and not your product or service. One creative director I knew claimed she could tell whether or not a mailing would be successful just by counting the number of times the writer used the word “you”.

48. Use the back of the letter

Don’t waste that important space. Use it for testimonials, for Q&A or to make a longer letter.

The Brochure

49. Put your strongest benefit on the cover of your brochure.

It’s the best possible way to get them to open and read it.

50. Put numbers in your headlines.

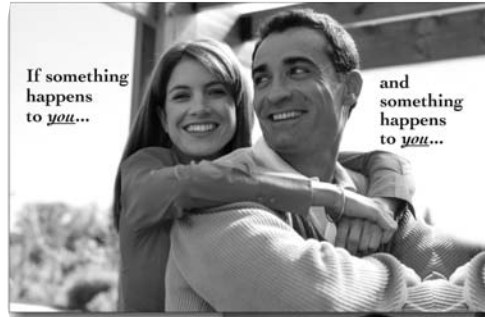
“Saves you 3 times as much.” “5 times faster than the competition.” Numbers add credibility to an ordinary headline. And use the actual number, don't spell it.

51. Put captions under photographs.

Captions are the most-read part of an advertisement, after the headline. The same is probably true for brochures. But don't use captions to simply describe the picture-make sure they include a strong selling message too.

52. Use pictures of people.

People are irresistibly drawn to pictures of other people – not stuff. And contrary to what you might expect, men are drawn to men, and women to women. There is also some research to support that we prefer looking at happy, smiling people.



53. Show your target market

The first question anyone will ask when they pick up your direct mail package or brochure is, “Who is this for – for people like me?” Showing a picture of your target market using or benefiting from your product will almost always improve response.



54. Use a striking visual.

Most advertising solutions are verbal – that means visual solutions really stand out. An advertisement for disability insurance showed a photograph of a bear about to catch a salmon. The headline said, “You probably feel like the bear. We'd like to suggest you're the salmon. Now let's talk about disability insurance.”

55. Include a Q&A.

Even the best direct mail package will sometimes leave people with questions. A Q&A format is an ideal way to anticipate and answer any possible objections. It also forces you to “think like a prospect”.

56. Use charts to prove a point.

The most popular newspaper in the United States is *USA Today*. They make extensive use of charts, graphics, and nuggets of information. *Bottom-Line Reports* has been having great success with this technique for years. Would your direct mail would be more effective if you did the same?



57. Make the last question a call-to-action.

Your last question should sound something like this: “Q. Sounds great. What should I do now?” Your last answer should include everything they need to act, including your 800 number. In my seminars, I call this “The Q&A Segue.”

58. Make them understand “at a glance.”

People are busier than ever before, and often have time just to glance over your brochure. They will then start to read – or decide not to read. If your main benefits and your offer are readily apparent at a glance, you will probably increase your response.

59. Include testimonials.

They can really add to your credibility, particularly if the prospect can recognize the company names. Also, include any positive product reviews or public relations.

60. Make your testimonials credible

If a customer thinks you’re the best in the world, that’s great. But a *more believable* testimonial might read something like, “I had my doubts, but this product really performed well for me.”

61. Use an unusual format.

A brochure does not have to be a simple rollfold. We used a paper airplane for an AT&T mailing; a huge newspaper-sized broadsheet for a wholesale club; and a globe-shaped brochure for another client.

62. Use “progressive disclosure”.

Don’t give the reader all the information right away. Reveal more and more as they unfold your brochure. Time-Life has been using this successfully for many years.

63. Steal an idea from a children’s book.

My favorite format was a package I did for a large department store chain. They wanted to feature three tops that mixed and matched with three bottoms. I designed the brochure so you could flip the pages to see each top with each bottom. I got the idea from one of my four year-old daughter’s books.

64. Use black type on light backgrounds.

That’s the way we were all taught to read. Avoid reversed-out type, except in short headlines. Above all, make the brochure easy to read.

65. Put the 800 number in the brochure.

Why force your prospect to try and find it somewhere else in the package? In the time they take to look – the phone could ring, they could get distracted, anything can happen.

This is particularly important in business-to-business direct mail, where the brochure is often the part they pass along.

66. Give them 10 reasons to act now.

People like lists – it’s one reason David Letterman is so popular. I did a highly successful mailing for New England Business Services that included the “Top 10 Reasons Why Contractors Lose Money.” And how to avoid them by using our product.

67. Give them a test.

Westar Home Security recently sent me a “Home Security Test.” I didn’t know I needed a home security system until I took that test. It’s an extremely effective way to increase response.

The Reply Device

68. Put in a photograph of the offer.

Even if it’s simply a free report. You need to show people what they’ll get. Sometimes the offer can be a photograph. UltraSlim says, “Send us any photo of yourself, and we will send you a computer-generated photograph of you at your desired weight!”

69. Put “sell” copy on the reply device.

I have a test that I call the “empty envelope” test. Basically, if your mail got opened and everything fell out of the package except the reply device, would it 1) give people enough information to respond, and 2) give people enough reason to respond. If the answer is yes, you have a great reply device!

70. Offer something money can’t buy.

When we launched a sweepstakes for Quaker Oats, our prizes included breakfast with the crew from a popular TV show. If you come up with an offer that can’t be bought or duplicated, you might significantly increase response.

Free! See what your home will look like...

Yes, I'd love to see what my home would look like with a Systems Paving solution. Please contact me to arrange for a "before" and "after" digital rendering of my house, and show me all my design and color options.

I would also like additional information about your special Financing offer with No Payments and No Interest for 6 months.

PH80a

Samantha A. Sample
123 Any Street
Anytown, USA 12345

Home Phone: () _____ Preferred time to call _____
Work Phone: () _____ E-mail address _____ (Optional)

Mail in this card, or call toll-free 877-728-3944 for immediate attention, or visit www.systemspaving.com

LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA, AND ATLANTA, BOSTON, CHICAGO, DALLAS, DENVER, INDIANAPOLIS, PORTLAND, SEATTLE, SYRACUSE, AND VIRGINIA BEACH
Independently owned and operated California License #661576 • VIA Contractor's Lic. # SDALL196127 • Oregon License # CCB 168710

71. Personalize the reply card.

If you can only personalize one element of the package, make sure it's this one. The easier you make it to respond, the more likely people will.

72. Add a “lip” to the reply card.

This is an extra piece of paper that folds over on the right or left. This gives you a little more room to describe your offer, or show a photograph of it. Some business magazines ask you to save this as a “record” of your subscription, to highlight the fact that professional magazines are usually tax-deductible.

73. Include a brief questionnaire.

People love to share their opinions, and questionnaire mailings often get a very high response. Keep it to no more than 7-9 questions.

Then put the reply card right underneath it. After all, your prospects already have a pen in their hands, they will be more likely to respond.

74. Thank them for responding.

This is particularly effective in fund-raising. It works because many people pick up the reply device before they've decided whether or not to act. A simple “thank you” can help push them over the edge.

75. Include “Yes” and “No” boxes.

For some reason, this seems to involve people and can improve response. But never, ever invite them to “Opt out” if you can help it. Someone who doesn’t need your product today may need it next week.

76. Include a “Maybe” Box.

I used this with great success in several mailings. My goal was to get people who were undecided to hold up their hands. Of course, the danger was in possibly cannibalizing the “yes” people. It didn’t. We found that for every “Yes”, we received an incremental 40 “Maybe’s.” Then we called every one of them.

77. Let them fax or e-mail their reply.

This is ideal for prospects who don't want to call the 800 number, but want prompt attention. It also may increase response. You should also offer an Internet option.

78. But go for the phone call...

This allows you to turn prospects into customers much faster and also enables upsell and cross-sell.

79. Include a moneyback or satisfaction guarantee.

You can mention it in several places, but you should show it on your reply card. Any last minute hesitation from the prospect may be dispelled.

80. Personalize the offer.

Advertising Age used a cartoon on their outer envelope with this caption: “We need someone with vision...creativity...and great marketing instincts. We need Alan Rosenspan!” I thought this was the single best direct mail package I had ever seen – until I realized not everyone had my name on their cartoon.

Inside, they offered me a full-size copy of this personalized cartoon with my subscription. People love seeing their names in print, on coffee mugs, almost anything.

81. Include an 800 number.

But it’s a reply card. They mail it to us. *Doesn’t matter.* Some prospects may change their minds about how they prefer to respond. Or they mess up when they write it. Why not give them the opportunity to call if they need to?

82. Test a business reply-paid envelope.

Traditional thinking says you should only include a BRE when you're asking your prospect for credit card information. However, privacy has become such an issue that you may increase your prospect's comfort by offering them a BRE. And that would increase response.

83. Offer a white paper.

A white paper is an report on changes in your industry, a look into the future, or anything that has value to your prospect. It positions you as the leaders or experts in your field, and can generate a surprisingly good response.

84. Offer a free "kit".

Never offer "more information". Package that information into a kit. It not only sounds like a better offer, but it gives you the flexibility to change what's inside, take out items, or insert them as needed. You can even name the kit after your main benefit. For example, for Putnam Funds, I created a "Cut Your Taxes" kit.

85. Use the word free on the reply device.

Make it big. There's no better way to describe your offer.

86. Assign a dollar value to the offer.

You can use how much the average person will save, or how much you'd have to pay to get something similar. You can even include how much it cost your company to develop it. For example: "Our \$500 report on trends in mutual fund investing – yours free!"

87. Give them a choice of offers.

It's another way to involve your prospect. Do you want our coffee mug in green or in black? But don't give them too much of a choice-it could decrease response.

88. Put a deadline on the offer.

Remember that the role of the offer is to get people to act now.

The advertisement is a flyer for Ancestry's Family History Report. At the top, it says "Call Now For Your FREE Family History Report". Below this is a central image of the report itself, which features a map of the United States and various text boxes. Three callout boxes with arrows point to specific parts of the report: "This has the origin and history of your line and last name.", "This map shows where other family members live across the United States.", and "Where did your family come from? This shows their Point of Departure." Below the report image, the text reads "Call 1-800-509-3991 and we'll send you this fact-filled report on your family name." The flyer is divided into several sections: "Who Are You?" (How much do you really know about your family history?), "Where Did You Come From?" (Now it's easier than ever to find out more about who your ancestors were, what they did and where they came from.), "What Can You Discover?" (It's almost like a treasure hunt... because each new fact and discovery may lead you to another... You might find your family name in Historical Newspapers...), and "Where Do You Start?" (Millions of Americans have already started on this fascinating new hobby. Now you can join them. Ancestry can provide you with fast, easy access to over 1 billion family records. We can show you how to build your own Family Tree and it becomes something you are proud to share with your family and friends. But first - take advantage of this amazing offer. Call us now to get your Free Family Report.) At the bottom, the Ancestry logo is displayed with the tagline "Your Story Begins Here" and the phone number "Call 1-800-509-3991".

A package for ChildReach has a yellow sticky on the reply form with a date, and the number of children who need homes before this month. Make sure you give people enough time to respond – but no more than 30 days.

89. But give it to everyone.

“Only the first 100 people to respond will receive this free premium” can be an excellent way to get people to respond faster. However, you can also turn everyone else off. If you do use that technique, I recommend that you give everyone the free premium. It will make them feel good about your company.

90. Increase the offer if they act now.

The Kirby vacuum cleaner comes with a \$500 discount – but only if you buy on the same day they demonstrate it in your home. Otherwise, it's full price. Anything you can do to get people to act now, and not put it off until later, can increase response.

Miscellaneous

91. Mail a follow-up reminder.

One of the most successful programs we ran for AT&T included a short follow-up letter. It read: “10 days ago, we sent you a letter about a very important offer from AT&T.” Response jumped substantially.

92. Test an interactive device.

Stamps and stickers usually boost response – and are certainly worth a test. Anything that lets the prospect spend just three extra seconds with your mailing will increase response.

93. If you have news, use it.

The word “New” is almost as powerful as the word “Free.” And don’t merely mention news, use it prominently throughout your package. It will increase response.

94. Make customer mailings look different than prospect mailings.

If your customer mailings look the same as your prospect mailings, you’re missing the point. Because you know your customers, and they know you. Mailings to them should look like you’re trying to assist them, and not trying to sell them.

95. Re-mail an old control.

Too many clients get tired of their direct mail packages faster than the public does. Find a package that worked very well in the past, update it, and mail it now. You will probably get a good response.

96. Change the format of your control.

Use the same copy, the same offer, and simply change the size of the package or the format. This is particularly important when you're mailing over and over again to the same lists.

97. Add a lift note.

A lift note is anything that will "lift" response. In magazine publishing, it's usually a separate note from the editor who is amazed that you're even hesitating about responding. But it can be from a satisfied customer, or almost anyone. Make sure it focuses on the offer.

98. Make the 800 number bigger.

Sound simple, but nothing says "Call me" like a bold 800 number. The smart cataloguers put it on every single page. Does your direct mail have it on every single element? Why not?

99. Make your direct mail look important.

This is particularly true in business-to-business. One way is to use the manila colored envelope favored by the IRS and other government agencies. Your goal is to do something that will make your direct mail package the first one opened that day.

100. Test offers aggressively.

After list, this is the second most important part of a direct mail package. I did a five-way offer test for the MathWorks, where one offer outpulled the others 7 times over.

101. Try for more than one response.

One of my clients uses a double reply card in every mailing. It reads, "One for You. One for a Colleague." It lifts response an average of 40% – for very little incremental expense.

10 Ways to Improve Your e-Mail

e-Mail can still be a remarkable effective marketing communications tool. It is best used when you want to reach people with news or timely information; to alert people or remind them; and as part of an integrated campaign.

Here are some techniques that have proven highly effective.

- 1. First, get permission.** And don't abuse permission – e-mailing too often may be cheap, but it can have disastrous effects on your brand and your company.
- 2. It's all about the offer.** Think of e-mail as an “electronic offer delivery system.” Put your offer in the subject line, or at least the headline of the e-mail.
- 3. The subject line is king.** This is the most important element of your e-mail, and the one thing you want to test. DON'T USE ALL CAPS or @#\$\$%& – it looks like you're screaming.
- 4. Avoid using the word “free.”** Or your e-mail may be blocked or filtered out. Instead of writing “Free Book” in the subject line, write “Valuable Book for You.”
- 5. Link at the top and bottom.** Putting a link at the top of the e-mail increases response. Why? Not sure – just do it.
- 6. Send people to a micro-site only.** If you send them to your regular web page, they don't know where to look or what to do. And you don't capture their name.
- 7. Include an 800 number.** Some people print out their e-mails. Many prefer to call.
- 8. Offer opt-out options.** Always give them a way to opt-out – but be creative. Give them a choice of what they want to receive, or when, or how.
- 9. Add a viral element to every e-mail.** 73% of people report that they will pass along an e-mail if it “has value.” Don't overlook this opportunity to generate more customers at no extra cost.
- 10. Use e-mail creatively.** It's a great way to do surveys; a low-cost way to test different copy approaches and offers; an excellent follow-up to direct mail, or for confirmation.

Additional information is available on our website at www.alanrosenspan.com.

May we put our experience to work for you?

Review of your Creative

If your next direct marketing program is important to your company – please contact us for a free consultation. We'll be happy to review your brief and/or your materials and give you a recommendation plus a cost estimate. There is no cost and no obligation.

Consulting and Projects

We do one-day consulting projects where we work together with you to analyze your current direct marketing programs, potential opportunities, and your future plans.

Creative Work

We also do the creative work for direct mail, print, radio and e-mail.

We generate 4-7 different concepts for each assignment, and then work with you to develop the most effective one.

Our current client list includes AAA, Humana, Danbury Mint, BarNone, MBNA, American Express, My Family.com, Oreck, Scotts LawnService, Viking River Cruises and Up-to-Date in Medicine.

For many of our clients, we have been able to increase response several times over.

Corporate and Customized Seminars

If you want to improve the skill level of your marketing people, or you're looking for a great way to re-vitalize your team, you might want to call us in for a seminar.

We have done highly successful and interactive seminars for a wide variety of corporate clients, including Capital One, Navy Federal, PeopleSoft, The Wall Street Journal and many others.

Our contact information is provided below.

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