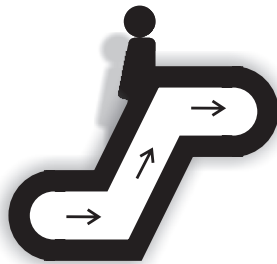


**escalate your
marketing response**



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+ Target the right people.

Don't waste time, effort and budget trying to sell to the wrong audience. If you're selling swimming pools, don't target people who live in high-rise apartments. If you're selling credit cards, don't sell to customers who have no income or means for repayment.

+ Get a BIG idea.

David Ogilvy said, "Unless your advertising is based on a big idea, it will pass like a ship in the night." A big idea is something that stops people in their tracks and engages them. It buys you interaction with your brand, product or service. Sometimes a big idea is focussed on the product. More often it's about the prospect or customer benefits.

+ Don't cheat the customer.

I recently purchased a wireless modem for my office. Inside the package was a card promoting a superior model with longer range than the modem I'd just purchased. Up until that moment I was 100% satisfied with my original purchase and then BANG - suddenly I felt cheated! The lesson here - it's about the customer. The same is true of your personalised marketing efforts. It's about the prospect, not just your brand and product.

+ Get credibility.

Your brand, your customers, scientific statements, impartial reviews and customer testimonials all help to demonstrate substance behind your promise. Give your customers all the facts and make them comfortable buying your products and services. Chances are if you don't give them enough, they'll look online where they may be exposed to a poor review or competitor offering.

+ Test.

I'm staggered at how few businesses apply testing to their database marketing efforts - particularly it seems in email marketing. I've seen tests which outperform a control by more than 600%. Testing allows you to predict your response and optimise your future marketing activity. There are numerous organisations who wouldn't be in business today without the gains they've made from testing. Make testing and experimentation a mandatory part of all your direct communications.





+ Gamble.

If the cost of taking a chance is small and your instincts tell you it's right then go with it. Remember, you're better off to be active and communicating than be undecided and do nothing at all.

+ Stand in their shoes.

Put yourself in the shoes of your target market and ask yourself the question "Am I glad to be on this database and receiving this offer?" If not, you're potentially damaging the credibility of your brand (and the effectiveness of your next communication). What can you do to make the communication add value to them? Can you further segment your list and either develop variations or restrict your audience to the relevant few?

+ Make their customers yours.

An effective way to acquire new customers is to leverage from a brand whom they have an existing relationship (and their database). Think about your customers and who else they naturally do business with. See if you can become cooperative partners to help one-anothers business. For example, I helped Bayer Animal Health establish a relationship with a dog micro-chipping supplier, Petsafe. This allowed Bayer to sponsor the welcome mailings and provide coupons and samples of their product. It's a win-win relationship with customers thanking Petsafe for providing the relevant, value-added discounts and incentives.

+ Communicate a service.

Aspire to make your communications a value-add service to your customers. This is achieved by carefully considering their needs. Make your communication customer-centric. It should include the word "you" regularly (meaning the customer), rather than simply talk about you and your company. Try adding simple messages to your communications mix that don't overtly sell but let your customers know you're thinking about them and looking out for them. A great example of this is the reminder message my airline sent me in advance of my passport expiry; I was pleased to be reminded and it also made me think about my next international holiday.

+ Value your brand.

Occasionally I hear marketers talk about 'the below the line stuff' and I shudder each time. I always prefer to view a brand from a customer perspective, where every contact with an organisation contributes





to my perception of their brand. Each time you send out a mailing, an email or an SMS message, you're representing your brand. It's an opportunity to strengthen or damage the customers' perception. When the stakes are this high you want to be sure you give each task the appropriate care - which means don't skimp on specialist resources and budget.

A brand is much much more than a TV advertisement and how you talk in person to your customers is critical. Remember, it costs six times as much to win a new customer as it does to acquire a new one.

+ Learn from successes.

Personalised marketing is a careful balance of art, science and perseverance. To often, professionals in the industry disregard what has worked before in the interests of a unique creative solution. Yet what lifts response in one market can often be replicated or improved upon. If you see something you admire or know has worked, keep it and use it as inspiration for your own campaigns.

+ Repeat your successes.

If you have a winning campaign then keep it going. Test elements of change within it and optimise for even better performance. Don't throw it away and move on to something new - remember you will tire from your campaign far before your customer does. Try casting the net further by exposing your successful campaign to more customer or prospect groups.

+ Incentivise action.

An incentive is a little something extra that gets people to act now - to visit your website, send an SMS reply, visit your your store or call a 1800 number.

+ Highlight the incentive.

If you have a great incentive, make sure your audience knows about it! Don't be afraid to use it as the central thrust within your communication. Include a picture of the incentive to get more attention and make it tangible. Just don't make the incentive the only part of your communication; use the incentive to get them hooked, to engage and absorb more information on your product or service.





+ The cheque's in the mail.

Use a simulated cheque or voucher to highlight the value of your incentive and as a mechanism for capturing response data. Personalise it to the recipient - they'll find it impossible to throw away.

+ Don't stamp the postcard.

Postcards were a novel and successful direct mail tool but in my experience have lost effectiveness in recent years. The problem being postcards are too commonplace and get lost with unaddressed mail which is often 'shaken out' of the mail prior to the real sorting and reading. Test a standard letter and envelope against a postcard to see what impact it has on your response. It might cost a little more to do but the results are often worth the investment.

+ Remember perceived value.

The value of an incentive can be much more than its cost to you. Rather than give a \$20 voucher, can you offer a \$50 discount on your product? Or source goods with a higher RRP at a much lower price - and reinforce the RRP value in your communication.

+ Make your incentive work for your brand.

Your brand is built by association. Make sure your incentive improves the perception of your brand. If you want to be seen as a premium quality brand, use a premium quality incentive.

+ Stimulate action.

Use a time bound or close-off offer to generate immediate response. It also provides the perfect excuse to make another friendly reminder.

+ Let them choose.

Try giving four respondents a choice of incentive. It'll force them to think which one they would prefer. The responses will also give you more insight into the varied profiles of your customer base.

+ Use aspirational experiences.

Do you have the ability to provide an experience that can't be bought or valued? Many brands have sponsorships that provide an ideal avenue to create these experiences. Competitions that include prizes to win backstage passes or dinner with a star have good potential to drive good PR mileage and buzz from adoring fans.





+ Make a guarantee.

If you believe in your product or service, demonstrate your belief to potential customers with a bold guarantee. Make it stand out by printing your claim on a real certificate.

+ Build suspense.

Intrigue can be used as an engagement tool, to build curiosity and heighten response. This is especially true on outer envelopes, although it can flow through to many aspects of a campaign. A mail piece I did for Audi was designed to drive potential customers to an experiential website. The mailing didn't include an image of the car or even an Audi logo. It did include a personalised URL and an interactive fingerprint panel using heat sensitive ink. It generated a response exceeding 40%.

+ First impressions matter.

Subject lines and direct mail packaging matter - they get people interested enough to investigate further (or not look at all). Occasionally direct marketing professionals recommend a plain envelope and I regularly challenge this advice. Denny Hatch is a brilliant direct marketing author. He writes a book titled *Million Dollar Mailings* which features the most successful direct mail packages of all time. Read it and you'll notice each has a strong message on the outer envelope.

+ Try a branded envelope.

For direct mail which targets existing customers, try using a simple branded outer envelope containing just your company logo. These are often the envelopes that customers associate with important letters, bills or even cheques. If they think your direct mail is the later of these three they're bound to open it.

+ Personalise the introduction.

Every envelope needs an address carrier, just as every email needs a recipient address. This means it needn't be costly or difficult to add extra personalisation to the outer or subject line. Examine what data is available and use it to make the recipient think you've created this piece especially for them or their industry.

+ Windows that won't smash or crash.

Use multiple windows on your envelope to make it more interesting. Tease the customer with what's inside and engage them from the moment they pick up your piece. Try to display any personalised





elements - the customer can immediately see you've gone to the trouble to create something tailored especially for them.

+ Make your envelope unusual.

Be creative with your outer envelope so your recipient is captivated from the get-go. A mailing I did once included the full letter printed on the outer along with the message "Communication without barriers." Not only did it stand apart from other mail, it reinforced the mailings proposition.

+ Get dimensional.

Dimensional parcels are interesting. They're always opened ahead of the other mail and in a B2B environment they often attract an audience, encouraging conversations and generating a buzz in the office. If you're sending a parcel, think about your audience - governments departments don't like parcels that 'tick' and households often have to collect parcels from their local post office (make sure they're not disappointed with the effort).

+ Include a pencil.

Pens and pencils will always improve your mail response. In a mailing I once did for Air New Zealand we achieved an improvement of more than 30% simply by enclosing a 10c pencil.

+ Be tactile.

Find items that aren't bulky and allow you to have the advantages of dimensional mail without the postage bill. Items I've sent that meet this criteria include: mouse traps, golf tee's, key rings, bottle openers, CD's, balsa planes, refresher towels, playing cards, calculators, compasses, pens, flash drives, socks, photo frames, credit card wallets, chocolate bars, tooth picks, fly swats, vitamin tablets, tea bags, cutlery and more.

+ Get busy.

Find good reasons to talk to your customers more often. As a general rule you will improve your response by at least the same % as the increased frequency of communication. So if you increase your frequency by 20%, expect at least a 20% improvement in your overall response rate.

+ Put a toe in first.

Rather than sending an email or direct mail item to your full database, try a portion of your customers or prospects first. Then





model your responses based on the uptake. You'll find which offers should go to all of you list and which are better off restricting to special segments. Overall you will improve your marketing ROI.

+ Be thoughtful.

Before using outer envelope messages think about people other than the recipient who might view the package - an inquisitive secretary or partner? Perhaps it's an urban myth, but I once heard about a package with 'test results enclosed' which triggered rumours of ill-health for a CEO and sent the share-price tumbling.

+ Be obvious.

Creativity is great - it gets an audience interested and engaged but don't take it too far. A mailing I did for Optus presented a Nigerian scam letter which was used to highlight the SPAM they were automatically filtering from customer email. But the creative was too clever for some because the reveal was hidden away. This caused more than a few calls of complaint amid confusion Optus were part of a Nigerian investment scam. Not quite the response we had in mind.

+ Less is more.

Make exclusivity a goal of your personalised communications. If your recipient thinks he or she is one of a few recipients they will feel more valued. The less people they believe are on your list, the more valuable they will feel.

+ Don't leave out the letter.

The letter is still the most important part of any direct mail piece. Make sure you avoid the creative temptation to either leave out the letter or to disguise it within a brochure. When people open mail, the first thing they search for is the letter; it's the piece about them, not the brochure about you. Make your letter look like a letter, complete with A4 or A5 letterhead, addressee information and a signature.

+ Get real.

Ensure you have a real person and real phone number associated with each piece of personalised communication. The recipients expect to be able to directly phone or reply to your signatory.





+ Use handwriting.

Handwriting effects often look plain ugly and ultra cheesy. But that has changed with improvements in production technology. It's now possible to authentically use handwriting or highlighting to add a personal touch to your direct mail, especially where the handwritten piece includes personalised elements such as the recipients name, their last purchase or date of visit. Some of the most successful charity mailings have employed this technique. Creating a handwritten effect on post it notes is also a very effective tool.

+ P.S.

The Latin term *post scriptum* is an abbreviated to P.S. and is used at the end of letters to address something the author forgot to address. As a direct marketer it's important that you don't forget this is one of the most read parts of your personalised message and can be used to good effect in both mail and email.

+ Tell them they're valued.

Human nature means we love to be noticed and valued. Your customers and prospects sense your value of them by what you say and how you say it. An exclusive incentive for our 'most valuable customers' is one way you can tell customers they're valued and lift response rates (even for low value segments). Be careful to appear authentic and ensure your message is matched by its delivery and production values.

+ More dates.

If you do a regular mailing, try testing it across a number of mailing dates to establish any seasonality or pattern of response. Always think about your customers and the right day of the week or time of the month or season to get to them. Are they paid monthly? Do they go away on summer holidays or celebrate any religious occasions?

+ Get personal.

Personalised communication is just that - it's your chance to talk to customers or prospects as individuals. Be sure then to version your correspondence according to your previous interactions and all available data. Try to link your product to their needs.

+ Manage relationships.

People do business with brands but buy from people. Wherever possible make the extra effort to have your personalised





communications from the local manager, relationship manager or salesperson that the customer has bought from before. Your recipient is more likely to pick up the phone and talk to someone they know. Likewise, you will get support from your sales team if they feel involved in the marketing material (just be sure they approve it and are aware when it's going to land with their customers). Make it authentic by writing in the first person and using a conversational tone.

+ Get more personal.

Personalise every element within your communication and make it overt. It's human nature to read something that's made especially for you, so if you've personalised it, make sure they know it and read it. Continue your personalisation through to the response device and don't ask for information you already have from a customer (but allow them to modify with any changes). A postcard mailing from BP featured a sponsored racing car with the recipients name on the window. Customers loved it! It had great recall and some customers even had it framed or enlarged into posters.

+ Make it easy to read

Your recipients are just like you. When you receive a communication do you skim read it first and then decide if you need to read more? Chances are your customers are the same. Make your correspondence easy to read with short sentences and paragraphs, bold headlines and bullet points. This is particularly true at the start of your letter or email, when you are drawing your customer in, so they read the more in-depth information contained further down.

+ Make it readable.

Not everyone has perfect vision. In fact, more than half the population wear glasses or lenses, with greater prevalence in older customer groups. Make sure your carefully crafted copy can be read by using an 11pt or greater font and spacing of at least 110%.

+ Them not you.

Your communication needs to be relevant to its recipient. Show them you understand them and their needs rather than simply talk about the features and benefits of your company, product or service.





+ Tell them exactly where to go.

Tell your customers exactly what you want them to do and how to do it. Make it clear what you want them to do and don't be afraid to reinforce it over by repeating in your close or P.S. messages.

+ If they don't act.

Make it clear to your recipients what will happen if they don't respond to your offer. Sometimes approaching the task from the negative jolts more action. Certainly it's another way to express the action you want from the customer.

+ Highlight your key point.

Use formatting such as bold, highlighting, circles or underline to highlight the key point in your copy. Avoid the temptation to highlight multiple attributes - it will only confuse the reader. Make the key benefit clear to them by keeping all other formatting simple and consistent.

+ Make it relevant to the now.

In reality direct marketing is often driven by a new service, product development or a company financial need. While this may be the case, try to make your message relevant to the customer, look at current events and see if there's any link? A tyre special before the winter holidays makes it appear like you're looking out for your customers.

+ Trigger an interest.

Arguably the single most important thing you can do as a marketer is identify relevant trigger points to engage your prospect and customer groups. A trigger is an event or behaviour that drives a contact with your customer; be it by phone, mail, email or any means. The beauty of trigger marketing is you are immediately relevant and that means more compelling and more responsive (in fact up to 10x more responsive). Most importantly, trigger marketing doesn't happen in a burst... it goes on forever. Trigger marketing drives constant success, every day, every week and every month of the year.

+ Vary your format.

Size does matter. Try non-standard sized mail or packages are just that extra bit interesting and stand apart from the everyday clutter of messages. Sometimes it's worth paying a bit extra to get noticed. That said, some of the most interesting pieces are smaller.





A piece I worked on for Macquarie Bank was styled like a miniature tax kit. Not only was it interesting, it reinforced the key proposition - minimising your tax bill.

+ Put them in good company.

People are comforted when they aren't the only one buying your product or responding to your offer. They get comfort from masses who are doing the same thing. Use this to your advantage by telling them how many responses you've already had or featuring known or celebrity customers who have already purchased (seek the customers permission first).

+ Use a second envelope.

People have limited attention spans and generally give each envelope a certain amount of time before deciding those that deserve more time and attention. If you have a lot to say, use this to your advantage by enclosing a second (or third) envelope within your originating mail pack. It starts the customers' intrigue over again and allows you to spread multiple messages without paying for additional postage.

+ Control the customer.

You normally want customers to read your material in a certain order. Some professional direct marketers recommend using a number of elements in a mail pack. Generally this is a dated practice, from days where audiences had more time than they do today. Try to encapsulate your letter and brochure together by using a format folded down from A3. Or include your vouchers at the bottom of your letter or in a custom made folder. It's less confusing and easier for the customer to see what you want read first. It also allows you to easily personalise across all elements.

+ Look first, then read.

Customers look at what you want them to read first, then decide if they're interested to read more. Make your personalised communications visually appealing first. Use an image that demands attention. If you are using only type, make sure your headline is concise and typeset in a visually interesting way. Try illustrating your letter or brochure with imagery appropriate to your message - it makes it easier to read.





+ People love other people.

Use photos of people to build an emotional story to your communications. Where possible version your imagery to depict people in situations appropriate to segments within your target audience. It visually says to your recipient that this product is made for people like me.

+ Use real customers.

Testimonials are an effective selling tool. They take the discussion away from just you and your customer. Through a customer's voice you can say more about your product or service without sounding over the top. Testimonials introduce an impartial and credible source. Make sure you seek approval to use your customers first and where possible use a photo so your customers can visualise who is speaking. And while satisfied customers are great, those that discuss their original skepticism and how it was overcome or misplaced will have more empathy and credibility.

+ Numbers stand out.

Use numbers in your copy rather than spelling them out. "It's three times more appealing" just doesn't stand out as much as "3 times more appealing." Numbers bring with them more precision and scientific credibility. Use this to your advantage by using the decimal places; "On average our customers have improved response by 2.3 times."

+ Involve your audience.

At first glance your audience might not have a need for your product or service. If you ask them to complete a quick and simple test you can involve them and create a need.

+ Use graphs.

Graphs are an effective tool for illustrating a fact. They can be used to make a point clear and to accentuate the benefits more than can be done in text alone.

+ Frequently asked questions.

Use commonly asked questions within your marketing to overcome any customer resistance. Where possible use real customers to help you develop your questions. At worst, developing a list of FAQ's forces you to think like a customer, to understand and then resolve their questioning.





+ Reinforce your call to action.

Make the answer to your last question your call to action. It leaves the customer in no doubt as to what you want them to do next. And make sure you repeat your call to action on every piece or page of collateral - it makes it easier for the customer to respond.

+ Use a summary list.

Lists are easy to interpret and in the modern world simplicity is the key to succeeding with your communication. A summary list illustrating to customers the ten reasons why you need this product or service today is a sure way to improve response.

+ Include more than two options.

Where your desired response is 'buy now' don't limit that to the only response option. Give your audience room to breathe and display their interest. Create an option for the customer who is interested but not quite ready to buy now so you can identify and nurture leads.

+ Give them something for nothing.

The easiest way to get people to respond is to give them something for nothing (a free trial, a sample or information of value). It's why so many websites provide the opportunity to download a paper in return for a little reciprocal data (to further qualify the respondent). Calling it a 'white paper' automatically gives it more value than 'more information'. When someone downloads a relevant paper they are indicating interest. Furthermore, the paper is an opportunity to further display credentials and build towards the sale.

+ Free is good.

It's a word that people gravitate to. It means they are getting something for nothing and that encourages action. If you are giving something away say its free and you'll get better response rates. To illustrate 'buy on get one free' will always considerably out-perform the same incentive couched as 'two for the price of one.' The same applies to subscriptions, whereby '3 months free' will always outperform '15 for the price of 12.'

+ Big numbers get bigger results.

The previous example shows there's more than one way to express an incentive. Think about your incentive and see if there's a way you can express it using bigger numbers. A 10% discount doesn't seem





much but on a big ticket item or a sustained period of time, it can add up to thousands of dollars. If it does, why not highlight the value of the discount by saying 'we've slashed \$12,000 off the price'?

+ Make friends.

It's true that people associate with other people like themselves. This means your customer probably knows at least ten other prospects for your product or service. Exploit this truth by offering pass-on offers.

+ Thank advocates.

Your advocates can include customers, past customers, prospects or professional influencers. Regardless, they don't need to refer new customers to you. If they do, make sure you thank them appropriately for it - it encourages them to do it again.

+ Ask for opinions.

People love to be consulted and provide an opinion. If your audience isn't ready to buy your product now, at least open a dialogue by asking them what they think. It starts a sales conversation and shows the customer you value them and their thoughts.

+ The law of the few.

Malcolm Gladwell authored a fantastic book titled *The Tipping Point*. In it he discusses the *law of the few* - a principle where a select few customers can be identified as trend-setters and influencers over the majority. Try to understand who are the critical few within your customer and influencer network and separate them out for special marketing treatment.

+ Follow up.

As a general rule, a reminder follow-up message will generate half the response again of your initial offer. Which means if you get a 10% response rate you can expect a 5% response from the remaining 90% non-responder group. You don't need to follow up all customers. Model your original respondents and establish which segments justify the expense of a follow up. Ensure your subsequent message has strong visual tie's with the original communication and include everything they need to respond.





+ The rule of the 45.

It's been said 45% of customers who exhibit an interest are still in the market for that product or service a year later. Common sense tells us this is more appropriate to high value goods or business to business decisions but there's a lesson in it - don't give up on your leads easily. Be tenacious with maintaining contact.

+ Don't do it all at once.

Don't try to cram all of these tips into your next marketing piece. You'll only succeed in confusing yourself and your customers. Make judgmental decisions and continue to test for best results.

+ Contact me.

Let me review, create or evaluate your personalised marketing efforts to improve your response rates. I'm always improving my own knowledge so please let me know the results of implementing these tips. Of course, if you have additional tips you'd like to share I would welcome your correspondence.

