

Direct-Mail Catalog Campaign Mistakes

Direct-mail catalogs are very powerful sales tools that all retail and even many service-oriented and B2B companies should employ. Good catalogs can be found everywhere, but great catalogs are truly diamonds in the rough. Flip through two or three catalogs and you're bound to find mistakes that could have been avoided.



Here are some mistakes to avoid for your next direct-mail color catalog marketing campaign:

Uninspired design/sloppy type

Catalogs are more than a conduit between customers and your business: They're a complete branding vehicle that sells today and tomorrow. Unsure of how to create original catalog designs and layouts, some companies try to emulate competitors' catalogs. While it is a good idea to know what your competitors sell and how they are presenting their messages, it is unwise to copy their designs because you limit your ability to distinguish your brand. You want your customers to instantly recognize your catalog when it comes in the mail, so make sure your catalog design and layouts are unique.

Being original does not mean being gaudy. Some typefaces such as Arial and Times New Roman are easy to read. Choose fonts that let customers glide over your copy and easily decide which items they would like to purchase. Type that is too small can also hinder sales. The last thing you want is for your customers to associate your company with the headaches they get trying to read your catalog.

No order forms

Believe it or not, the absence of an order form is a common error among amateur catalog companies. Never forget to include an order form, address, website address and phone number to give your customers ordering options. Some people prefer to do business via mail, others opt for the phone and still others choose to go online. Never assume that your customers will not use a mail order form simply because you've included your website URL in your catalog. Your order form should also be easy to fill out. Too many options, and you risk confusing the customer - something that's never good, especially when money is involved.

It doesn't hurt to inject a bit of personality into your catalog typography, but there's no reason to go wild, either. Large headlines for categories and products will serve you well here. Stick with two or three font types for a consistent look, and incorporate tried-and-true serif and sans serif fonts that are easy on the eyes.

Upper right highlights



When most people flip through catalogs, their eyes naturally skim the upper right hand corners, which makes this a perfect place to showcase product specials, insert testimonials and include other informative or sales-reinforcing boxes.

Wrong list/bad offer

Ever heard of the 40/40/20 rule of direct marketing? It states that 40 percent of your success is contingent on your mailing list, another 40 percent on your offer and the remaining 20 percent on everything else. There's no use in going through the labor and expense of producing a direct-mail catalog if you're going to send it to people who are unlikely to buy. Plus, if you don't include great offers that motivate purchases, you're better off saving your money. Use the tools at Spectrum to compile a custom list that matches your customer demographics.

Incorrect pricing

Proper proofreading is essential to direct-mail catalogs. An error in your product descriptions, info boxes, testimonials and other sections can reflect very poorly on your company. In fact, many customers are turned off by typos and incorrect word choices. Imagine what would happen if you forgot a zero in one of your prices - your catalog might be advertising a \$1,000 item for \$100! Not only could you face false advertisement allegations, cleaning up after the disaster would be a public relations nightmare.

Poorly printed pieces

Catalog companies are learning what book publishers have known for decades: The better your finished pieces look and feel in the hands of customers, the longer they'll hold them. Opt for a thick 100-pound gloss cover with 100-pound or 80-pound gloss text for your inside catalog pages. For a softer appeal, try 70-pound recycled matte text stock available from Spectrum, which will allow you to espouse the virtues of green printing to your customers.

Your direct mail color catalog marketing campaigns can yield big business for company if you do it right. Make sure you're not making these mistakes en route to creating a compelling catalog that sells.

About Us

Since 1985, Spectrum has provided better printing and service to nearly 5000 small business marketers, business owners and graphic designers. Spectrum combines state-of-the-art capabilities and the industry's best digital and offset sheet fed and web printing equipment with experienced print professionals and color specialists to deliver quality, consistent color matching and 99.8 percent on-time delivery. By offering a 100 percent customer satisfaction guarantee, Spectrum also stands behind every order, every time. Spectrum is your success story!

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