

Mail-outs, Telesales & Email Marketing

How can direct mail, telemarketing and email marketing reach the customers you want?

All three methods require careful planning and a knowledge of their respective audiences; all three can be used for the development of your business. Optimum effects may be achieved by combining the different methods – for instance, direct mail followed by an outbound call.

Direct Mail

To use direct mail (a marketing communication directly to a named person at a private or business address) effectively, you must first define your objectives and who you want to target.

The next step is to obtain a mailing list. Renting a list can save a great deal of time and energy on your part - but you must make sure it's compliant with data protection to protect yourself from legal action. You will also want to know some basic information about the list before taking it – for instance, when it was last updated, and whether you can prioritise people on the list by demographic group.

Design your mail shot to appeal to the people you're targeting. Include an incentive if appropriate, and make the response method as straightforward as possible.

People are more likely to respond to mailings that arrive midweek (Tuesdays and Wednesdays.) However, be aware that a response rate of more than 1% is unusual.

Costs vary with how much you manage in-house. However purchases including mailing lists, stationery, print and postage will be required at the least. Keep an eye on postage costs, and check whether the post office has any bulk discounts. After your campaign, assess the final expenditure in terms of cost per pack, cost per response and cost per sale. You can then use this information for future reference.

Pros & Cons

Direct mail can target very specific groups, at a relatively small expense. By conducting one mail shot at a time, you can measure response rates easily.

Less positively, direct mail is increasingly seen as junk mail. Moreover, to really get the best from this approach, professional copywriters and designers should be on board (which boosts costs.)

Telemarketing

Sales, customer services and research are all subsumed within telemarketing, as are inbound customer calls.

When receiving customer calls, maintain a record of all inbound contact. Be courteous and implement good customer service.

Outbound calls are best used as one part of a broader marketing campaign. A detailed script, ideally one that will not sound forced, should be prepared. The focus should be on qualities such as availability and price, as these are key points of interest for customers. When closing, agree the next steps (consistent with the customer's reaction to the offer.)

Costs are reasonable. Outsourcing the calls incurs a fee, and there will also be phone charges to pay. You can rent a list of contacts – make sure it is a manageable quantity, and confirm that the numbers are not registered with the Telephone Protection Service.

Pros & Cons

Again, this is a fairly low-cost option. It is very easy to monitor. It is particularly suited to following up B2B leads, establishing initial meetings and closing deals.

Unfortunately, cold calling is perceived poorly by consumers. Morale among cold callers can be low.

Email Marketing

When planning your campaign, consider the format of your email. What style of text and images would appeal to your intended audience? Keep your message brief and informal. Use an eye-catching subject heading to draw recipients in.

Offer the recipient the opportunity to unsubscribe, and to protect personal data, use mail merge facilities which personalise each email without including other recipients' names in the "To" box.

Process responses quickly, and make sure unsubscribed addresses are not targeted again.

Of all the options, this is the least expensive, particularly if you carry out the whole campaign. If you lack confidence in your copywriting or HTML skills, consider employing a professional. There are agencies with the expertise to design and implement the project. As with direct mail and telemarketing, a rented mailing list may also be worthwhile.

Pros & Cons

Email is very cheap. As an innovative and relatively new medium, it is particularly attractive to a young audience. Viral marketing can be very effective.

On the down side, “spam” is poorly regarded. It can be very difficult to initiate a dialogue.