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# **A New Dimension in Direct Marketing Success**

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FROM **THE ADVERTISING SOLUTION**

Are you planning to send out a direct mail campaign, either on its own or as part of a multimedia promotion?

According to legendary promoter Robert Collier, one of the promotional Legends featured in *The Advertising Solution*, if you want to draw attention to yourself, there's nothing like sending out an attractive piece of dimensional mail. I'm referring to anything that isn't flat, but that has something that lifts it to the third dimension. Sometimes this is referred to as lumpy mail.

It can be as simple as a box or a mailing tube, or it can be a padded mailer with something lumpy inside. It can even be something wild, like a coconut! You'd be surprised at what the Post Office will let you mail – but do check with them before finalizing your plans for any dimensional campaign.

Whatever form your mailer takes, it's sure to stand out among the ordinary envelopes and postcards your prospect generally draws out of the mailbox.

## Why Use Dimensional Mail?

The first obvious answer is that it gets noticed, and it elicits a response. According to the Direct Marketing Association's 2010 report on the subject, dimensional mailers generated an average response rate of 8.51% for B2B (business to business) mailers and 3.52% B2C (business to consumers) mailers. Compare that to the average response rate for an envelope mailer, which was just 1.38%, and it becomes clear that dimensional mail may well be worth the added expense to send.

Especially notice that average response rate of 8.51% for B2B mailers. That's huge. And it's especially impressive when you consider what a piece of mail has to go through before it gets noticed by the decision makers in a business office. Most executives are sheltered by their staff from having to deal with mundane matters, like the daily mail. From the mailroom clerk to the receptionist to the CEO's private secretary, tons of people have their hands in the mail, trying to eliminate anything that would be a "waste of time" to the boss.

It doesn't take much thought for staff members to toss an obvious flyer for an office supply company. But what will they do with a box that looks important and sounds and feels like it has a heavy object inside? People are less likely to take it

upon themselves to throw out something so intriguing and possibly of value. This doesn't look like ordinary "junk mail." It may not be an advertisement at all. It's hard to tell. And so the package is much more likely to be passed up the line and in fact get to the intended prospect.

And once it gets there, the likelihood is that it will be opened. It's just human nature. An attractive-looking box is going to be opened, and it will feel like you're opening a birthday gift. Industry research shows that dimensional mail can have an open rate of almost 100 percent.

And once it's opened, it gets people to act. The classic study on this was done by Baylor University in 1993. They found that dimensional mailers significantly improved response rates to direct mail solicitations. The study compared responses to either flat envelopes, envelopes with promotional products, or dimensional mail containing the same promotional product. They found that the response rate of people receiving the promotional product in the dimensional package was 57% higher than for people who received the same product in an envelope, and 75% higher than for people who only received a sales letter with no promotional product.

So dimensional mail is more likely to reach the right person, to be opened, and to elicit a response. It's a great vehicle to use when your target audience is someone who is very difficult to reach, like the CEO of a company.

A final consideration is that dimensional mail has longevity. If the promotional gift item is useful or attractive, it may be kept for months, or even years, as a constant reminder of you and your company.

## **How to Use Dimensional Mail**

The only drawback of dimensional mail is that it can be very expensive. It's expensive to assemble, the promotional item is expensive, the packaging is expensive, and the postage is expensive. That doesn't mean you can't make a profit off it, but it does mean that this method should be used judiciously in order to maximize your ROI.

I would never send out a dimensional mail piece to a large, amorphous list. The key here is to be targeted. You only want to send it to highly qualified existing customers or prospects – those who are most likely to respond to your offer.

I also like to test the effectiveness of the package on a portion of a list before rolling out to a larger mailing to the whole list.

Keep in mind the value of the sales potentially generated through the mailing. If you're selling something expensive, like a car, home or office remodeling, or European luxury cruises, then the ROI will be high, regardless of the cost of the promotion. This is the ideal place to use dimensional mail.

It's also great to use this kind of package when your highly qualified leads have a real need for your product or service, and to some degree are already familiar with your company. If you want to get attention to your brand, or you're launching a new product, dimensional mail can be a very effective marketing solution. I also like to use it when promoting an event – especially to a house file, or when I'm selling a high-ticket item.

## Tips for Creating Dimensional Mail That Really Takes Off

Here are some general rules that can help you plan a direct mail campaign using a dimensional package.

**1. Make it Recognizable and Consistent** The whole point of dimensional mail is to get attention, and once your prospects become familiar with who you are, you want to make sure they can recognize your company brand wherever they see it. So make sure all the pieces, from the packaging, to the color palette, to the logo, to the verbiage are consistent with your usual branding. You don't want there to be any confusion about who you are, and who sent this delightful package.

**2. Don't Forget the Message** As exciting as the item in the package may be, its purpose is to get attention – not do the selling. You should also include a letter or sales piece that gets your message across. And, if you want your letter to get read, it helps to tell your prospects something new that they don't already know about you, or your product or service. The letter should have powerful copy and the copy should make a connection with the lumpy object you included in the

package. You want prospects to then call you or visit your website to get more information.

And while you're at it, make sure your package has a clear call to action. Tell prospects what you want them to do. Give them a reason to call you, possibly with a time limit. As we saw, dimensional mail is ideal to elicit a response. So make it clear what that response should be.

**3. Include Contact Information** Put something on the gift item that identifies you and gives contact information. It's nice if prospects love the teddy bear you sent them, but unless your name and phone number or website is on it somewhere, they'll have no idea how to get in touch with you a year later when they need your service, and the original packaging is long gone.

**4. Identify Yourself** Don't try to be too mysterious with a dimensional mail package. Always put your company information in the package. Make it clear that the package is from you.

**5. Follow Up** Think of your dimensional mail package as part of a whole marketing campaign. For example, you might set up a dedicated landing page for prospects to go to. But don't just wait for them to show up. Now that you've sent something so interesting, make a follow-up phone call within a week of prospects having received the package. They may be quite willing to accept your call. And/or send a follow-up email with a link to your dedicated landing page.

**6. Watch Your ROI** In designing your dimensional mail campaign, be practical. Make sure you design something that's doable, and not so expensive that it undermines any profitability. You can have very effective results with even a small package. Or how about an invitation-type mailer with a beautiful wax seal? Do what you can afford and keep your ROI in mind.

As you can see, using dimensional mail can have many advantages, BUT you have to make sure you set up the campaign correctly right from the beginning.

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