

A “HOW TO” GUIDE FOR A DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGN

Direct mail is an effective marketing tool for congregations. While it may appear to be expensive on a per piece basis, it is a very efficient advertising tool because your congregation can target the audience you wish to reach.

PLANNING YOUR DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGN:

When designing your campaign you'll want to consider several factors:

- 1) **What is your objective?** Asking that question is an important first step. Are you trying to increase visitors to your church? Announce a special event? Let the community know about a social justice program at your church? After you have determined your objective, ask the following questions:
 - a. **Who do we want to contact with this mailing?**
 - b. **What is the message? (Do we need a response?)**
 - c. **What is our budget?**
 - d. **What is the timeline for the project?**
 - e. **How will we measure results?**
 - f. **How will we follow up with the targeted audience?**

- 2) **How time sensitive is the mailing?** If it's for an event, you will want to make sure that you allow enough time, from start to finish, to get the mailing item, or “piece,” in the hands of your audience. Of particular concern will be whether the piece will go out first class or “bulk rate”/non-profit. Postal delivery will vary greatly between the two. First class normally gets from the post office to the mailbox in 2-3 business days if mailed locally, 3-5 days if mailed outside the area. Bulk rate can be relatively fast, especially if it is mailed locally, but can also take as long as 10 days if mailed from a location outside your area.

- 3) **What is the best way to reach the audience – postcard or direct mail?** Knowing the demographics of your audience and planning your message will influence whether you use a letter or a postcard for you mailing. Here are some things to consider:

Postcards: Postcards have high-impact—particularly if they have colorful graphics, are oversized, and have a strong message. With no envelope to open, your message is seen immediately, providing quick readability and name/brand awareness. Graphics can be designed to the age and lifestyles of your audience. Young adults and busy families may prefer to be contacted with a postcard.

Letter: a letter may be seen as more important, and there may be some intrigue in receiving an envelope from an unknown organization. A letter feels more personal and the salutation can be personalized. It also is a good method for sharing a lot of information. And if the sender is an acknowledged leader (like your minister) it may have further impact.

THE FIVE STEPS OF A SUCCESSFUL DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGN:

1) Message

In crafting your message consider:

- a. Your audience demographics, including age, household formation, lifestyle, racial background, gender diversity, and so on.
- b. Your reason for sending the communication. Is it for a special event? An invitation to visit the congregation?
- c. Whether your message is written in compelling language and is succinct. Make sure you use language that addresses “features and benefits.” And that is focused on the recipient and not on your congregation!
- d. What action you want the recipient to take – tell them! “Join us...”
- e. Personalizing the message by using the “you” word... “Come visit our church – You’ll meet great people!”
- f. How you will measure the success of the mail campaign?

2) Lay-out and Design

If you are doing a postcard mailing, the UUA has some templates that you may use. <http://www.uua.org/growth/marketing/congregational/index.shtml>

There is also another church communication company, OUTREACH (www.outreach.com) that offers generic cards.

However, if you will have a specific message and will want to customize your own postcard you’ll need to design the front and back. A graphic artist can help. Or, if you work with a printing company or direct mail firm they may have design capabilities. Design and lay-out will be billed by the hour or by the job; negotiate costs up front. In designing the project be aware that the pictures used, edits, proofs, and so on, will all impact the design costs.

3) Printing:

Printing costs will be based on the following:

- a. Quantity
- b. Paper stock
- c. Number of colors used in your project (four color, two color, black & white – and how many colors on each side) as well as the “coating” of the paper.
- d. Size of piece
 - i. For postcards there are basically three sizes. (You may wish to check postage costs before choosing.):
 1. Standard: 4 1/4” x 6”
 2. Deluxe: 6” x 9”
 3. Sumo 6” x 11”
 - ii. For letters the standard is an 8 1/2” x 11” with a #10 envelope

- iii. There are also flat, folded, and tri-folded postcards, as well as many different sizes of letters, brochures, and envelopes. Spending more money to have a piece that stands out in the mail is money well spent. You want your mailing to be interesting and read!

Below are some hypothetical prices from a large postcard provider. **This chart is for example purposes only.** It gives you an idea of how costs will increase with the size of the card and the use of color. It also shows how the “cost per card” quickly decreases with larger print runs. (Note how quickly the cost drops based on quantity—from .215/ per piece for 1,000 standard cards to .1024/per piece for 5,000!

Sample Postcard Printing Costs

Quantity	Standard 4.25" x 6"		Deluxe 6" x 8.5"		Sumo Size 6" x 11"	
	4/1	4/4	4/1	4/4	4/1	4/4
500	\$129	\$155	\$195	\$234	\$265	\$299
1,000	\$179	\$215	\$275	\$330	\$375	\$424
2,000	\$259	\$311	\$415	\$498	\$575	\$639
5,000	\$455	\$512	\$775	\$893	\$1,015	\$1104

* 4/1 = full color on front, black ink on back

* 4/4 = full color on both sides

4) Mailing Address List

It is the targeted nature of direct mail that makes it such a successful marketing tool. *The list represents 40% of the effectiveness of the campaign* but is often the part that receives the least focus.

To get a mailing list you will want to go to a reputable direct mail company. Ask questions about the data they have in their list files, how often it is updated, and inquire about any specialty lists they might have.

There is a cost for buying address lists. Costs will likely be from \$.05 to \$.20 an address. The more specialized the list the higher the cost. But this will be money well spent. Your objective is to find the best “prospects” for your mailing so keep honing in and narrowing your search to the best of your abilities.

Make sure that you specify that you want the NAME of the addressee *and* “or current resident” printed on the address line, which assures that it will be delivered. Personalization is very important.

At a minimum consider segmenting your list by geography (zip or postal code, census tract or block group or carrier route; driving distance to your church, radius, or other factors) and demographics (age, home ownership, presence of children, ethnicity & cultural diversity, education, income, and other vital factors).

There are mapping tools that can help you determine geography by drive time. Many of the list suppliers have mapping tools. Studies show that 50% of congregants are within 10 minutes driving time to their church, 80% with 20 minutes (our members

may come from a longer distance because we have fewer church locations). Be judicious and realistic in your geographic reach. Looking at where the majority of your current members live may serve as a valuable guide.

Other list ideas include affinity groups, magazine subscriptions, and life values marketing.

Life values/life styles: Large direct mail companies will have lists by life style characteristics. Give them your “best guess” description of who you are trying to reach and they may just have lifestyle data that meets your needs. For example, one direct mail company has life style data on families interested in arts & antiques, community & civic activities, political party affiliations, charitable giving, the environment, natural foods, and more.

Affinity groups: Affinity groups are organizations that might share similar values. GLBT organizations, Planned Parenthood, Jungian Institute, Amnesty International, NOW, ACLU, and the Sierra Club are examples. These groups will often sell their membership list, but may require a minimum quantity (i.e. 5,000). If you’re interested in this type of list and live in a large metropolitan area you might consider partnering with other UU congregations to purchase the list.

Some local organizations (or local chapters of national organizations) may also be willing to sell their list to you. Perhaps there is a strong interfaith dialogue organization in your town, or a PFLAG chapter. Contact them directly and inquire. They may be particularly interested in providing a list if you have a special event that they support.

New homeowners: New homeowners represent another good target audience. There are two companies that specifically provide those lists. Many other list providers offer this service, too. Again, you can order by zip or postal code as well as by factors such as the presence of children, two income households, dwelling type, and so on.

A word of caution about lists: Before ordering from a company you might want to try and verify the list for accuracy. One good place to start is to find out how many consumer addresses are in the zip code you’ve chosen. Then ask yourself “is it possible that.....30% of them have recently moved in the last 60 days?” (unlikely). Trust your instincts before ordering a list. And don’t be afraid to ask lots of questions

The following are some list providers:

USADData, Inc. www.usadata.com

Info USA: www.infousa.com

Brand New Movers - <http://www.brandnewmovers.com/>

Homeowner Data Services - <http://newhomedata.net>

5) Postage and Mail Services

There are many variables that impact postage costs. Some of the factors include:

- size of the piece,
- type of piece (letter versus postcard),
- time-sensitivity,
- quantity,
- presorting by zip/block group,
- bar coding, and
- non-profit status.

In addition, the mailing company will charge a nominal fee (\$.02 - .05 per name) for ink-jetting addresses on the piece.

Summary of costs: (These costs are not updated for 2013)

Below is a sample budget for a one-thousand (1,000) postcard campaign:

Design Costs:	\$150
Print Costs: 4/1 Sumo Size:	\$375
Mailing List: \$.20/name	\$200
Postage: \$.24/piece	\$240
Mail Services \$.05/piece:	<u>\$ 50</u>
Total:	\$1,015

For questions or more information email growthresources@uua.org.