

# The **ENTREPRENEUR'S** Guidebook Series™

Next  
Page

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## Guidebook #64:

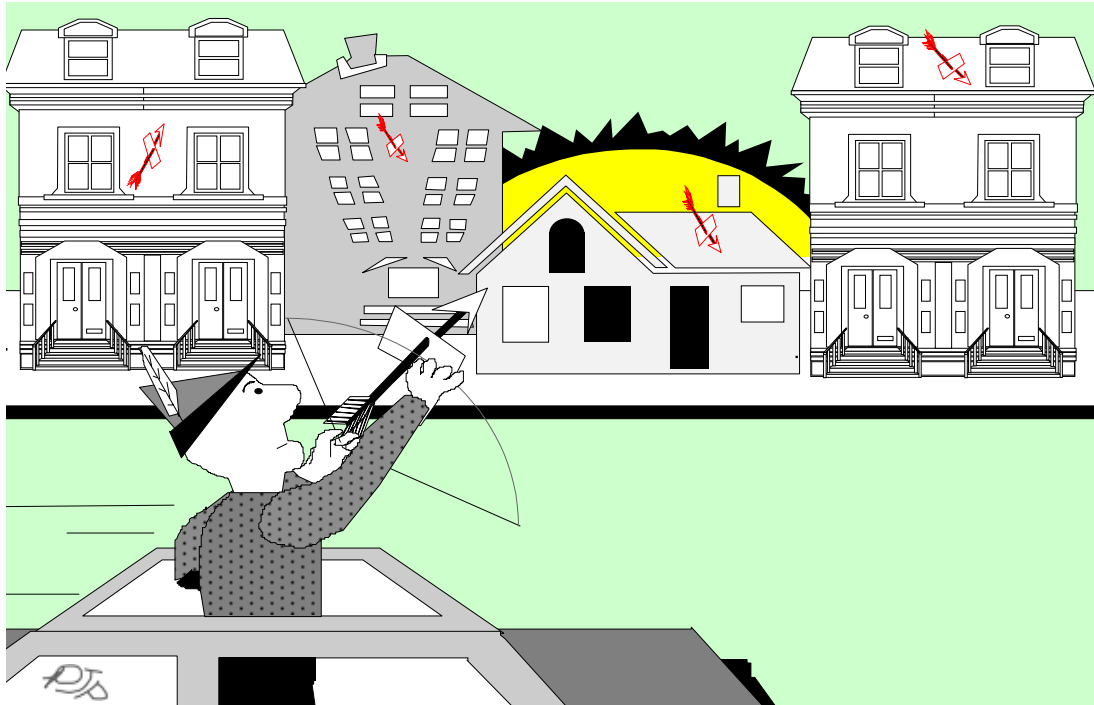
### *Creating Newsletter & Direct Mail*

<i>Promotions</i> .....	4
Designing a Newsletter.....	5
Newsletters Grab Attention with . . . . .	5
Newsletters Inject Desire with . . . . .	10
Newsletters Promote Action with . . . . .	19
Newsletter Design Tips.....	20
Newsletter Promotion Tips.....	24
Preparing a Direct Mail Promotion .....	27
Direct Mail Grabs Attention with . . . . .	27
Direct Mail Injects Desire with . . . . .	29
Direct Mail Promotes Action with . . . . .	32
Direct Mail Writing Tips.....	37
Direct Mail Promotion Tips.....	52
FIG. 1 – Newsletter Sample.....	60
FIG. 2 – Direct Mail Letter Sample.....	61



*“He’s been sulking ever since I suggested he actually put NEWS in a newsletter, not just promo ads.”*

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## ***CREATING NEWSLETTER & DIRECT MAIL PROMOTIONS***

**NEWSLETTER and direct mail promotions offer useful solutions for the advertising and promotion needs of many small businesses. They are particular useful for mail order operations and home based businesses.**

**This guidebook identifies key elements that should be present in each of these media. It also offers numerous writing & design tips to help you grab attention, inject desire and promote action, based upon the ODaC formula (discussed in Guidebook #62).**

## DESIGNING A NEWSLETTER

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NEWSLETTERS meet the needs of today's fast-paced world. They provide information quickly and in an easily digestible format. Because they can be produced so quickly, they are often the first conveyors of important news: everything from announcements of medical breakthroughs, to the results of statistical studies, to the identification of trends in society, to tips and shortcuts for professionals.

Newsletters are also highly respected because they are designed primarily and perceived by their audience to inform not to advertise. However, properly conceived they can do both.

*The success of a newsletter depends on the quality of the information and how well it is targeted.*  
**SUPERTIP**

### Newsletters

Grab Attention with . . .

#### Logos, Nameplates, Teasers & Other Newsletter Identity Parts

– Described below are the basic parts of a newsletter, each having an important affect on overall design appeal and readability (see the end of Guidebook #26 for a labeled diagram of a newsletter).

- *Dateline* – The dateline, or folio as it is often called, lists the volume and issue numbers and current date.
- *Footers* – Footers or foots as they are sometimes called, belong on the bottom of pages. They are usually used primarily for summary information or page numbers.

**NOTE** Page numbers and sometimes the newsletter's title are printed at the bottom of each inside page.

- **Headers** – Headers belong at the top of every inside page. They repeat the newsletter's title, or subtitle, along with issue number and date to help reinforce the newsletter's identity.
- **Logo** – In many cases, the front page of a newsletter contains the logo, or seal, of the association or firm publishing the newsletter.
- **Masthead** – In newsletters, the masthead is usually found on the front page; flush right or left vertically, or in the top part. Mastheads typically include the address, copyright

*A good reputation is more valuable than money.*

**PUBLILIUS  
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*Maxim 108*

information, subscription rates, and telephone number, as well as a list of names and positions of everyone associated with the publications of the newsletter.

**Nameplate** – A newsletter's nameplate, or banner as it is sometimes called, usually consists of the newsletter's title, a company logo and associated graphics. The type is usually set in a large, distinctive typeface at the top of the front page. Because a nameplate remains unchanged from issue to issue it pays to devote a lot of care to its design. Newsletter nameplates can be created with specialized software drawing programs, such as *Adobe Illustrator*, *Aldus Freehand* or *Corel Draw*. These programs give you a lot more control over type size and placement than do



most word processing and page layout programs.

- *Nameplate Subtitles* – Nameplate subtitles, placed below the nameplate, act to reinforce the editorial focus or intended audience.
- *Teasers* – Teasers are brief statements written to lure readers into the newsletter or a part of the newsletter that perhaps is close to an ordering section. Teasers are often found on the mailing label area of the newsletter. That way people will start reading your newsletter as soon as they pull it out of their mailbox.

**Reader Cues** – Without reader cues, the eyes of your intended audience are left

wandering all over the place, and most likely off the page and on to something else. Below is a list of commonly used reader cues, which can help focus the attention of your readers.

*Teasers are brief statements written to lure readers into the newsletter or a part of the newsletter that perhaps is close to an ordering section.*

- *Barriers* – Barriers are rules and boxes used to separate adjacent articles.
- *Captions* – Captions, or cutlines, are the informational blurbs that appear below or next to photographs and other illustrations. They are usually set in a small point size. Good use of captions means keeping them brief and making sure they relate directly to the photograph. Like headlines, they should contribute to the overall information of an article, not

detract from it. The best captions also add information that may not be included in the article itself.

**NOTE** Captions below pictures are read more often than headlines.

- *Columns* – Columns, or grids, provide the basic structure for body copy as well as page to page consistency that helps the reader access information more quickly. Newsletters usually run 3 to 5 equal grids or columns.
- *Crossheads* – Crossheads are the smaller, transitional heads within an article set under the subheads. They are good for long articles, but should be used sparingly, if at all, and only for clarity's sakes.

*A single lie destroys a whole reputation for integrity.*

**BALTASAR  
GRACIÁN**

- *Department Heads* – Help readers identify the category an article falls under.
- *Headlines* – Headlines are the titles of articles that invite the readers into the copy that follows. The ideal headline is short enough to be set in large type, yet long enough to attract the reader's attention.
- *Running Foots* – A running foot is a line across the bottom of the page that helps orient the reader within a document. Often, it contains the folio or dateline.
- *Running Heads* – A running head is a line of text across the top of the page that helps orientates the reader within a document. It might included the documents' title, author, chapter,

subject of current page or page number.

- **Subheads** – Subheads are explanatory heads, usually set in a smaller type (or italics) that appear under the headline. Placed within long articles, they perform two functions. First, they maintain the reader's momentum by breaking long blocks of copy into manageable, bite-sized chunks. Second, they provide an opportunity for readers skimming a page to find out what in a article.

A subhead can also be used to:

- bring out an additional point that don't fit well into the headline or that deserve special emphasis

*A subhead can be used to bring out an additional point that don't fit well into the headline or that deserve special emphasis.*

- expand on a major benefit or news-worthy point in the headline by adding more specific information
- function as a lead-in for a headline (who says subheads have to come after the headline?)
  - help draw the eye through the text
  - generate curiosity (subheads in newsletters should have news appeal)
  - serve as part of a one-two punch that begins with the headline

**NOTE** Consider using subheads in a question form. Write them to tell a quick, sequential sales story of their own at a glance.

- *Subtitles* – Subtitles, also called decks, taglines, overlines or blurbs, summarize the importance or the editorial focus of an article that follows. Essentially, they give more information about the content of the story.
- *Table of Contents* – A table of contents on the front page of your newsletter can increase readership by drawing attention to articles on its inside pages.

## Newsletters

### Inject Desire with . . .

**Editorial Content** – Most newsletters are journalistic in style. Typically, they include both straight news and feature stories and range from informal to formal depending on the organizations. At a minimum, a newsletter should have one major interpretive

article (12 or more paragraphs); two or more focus articles (8 or more paragraphs); and several short “updates” (2 or 3 paragraphs).

When selecting editorial content you also need to determine what the copy will be based on. For example, will it be based on:

*At a minimum, a newsletter should have one major interpretive article (12 or more paragraphs).*

- interviewing participants
- analyzing and rewriting existing information
- writing from scratch
- extensive research

The most common types of articles or stories are listed below.

- *Case Histories* – Case histories are articles written regarding your products

and their uses. It can include types of users, lists of well-known users people and organizations and quoted testimonials and endorsements.

- *Community Relations News* – Including articles in your newsletter that pertain to the community your business is located in is an effective way to generate good PR.
- *Company Activities* – Stories about your organization's activities with regard to community affairs, also makes for good PR.
- *Company History* – If your company is new you may want to write an article that describes your company, client list, methodology of doing

*Including articles in your newsletter that pertain to the community your business is located in is an effective way to generate good PR.*

business, and other biographical information.

- *Company Leader Profiles* – Profiles of leaders in your organization can help bolster your credibility.
- *Do's and Don't Checklists* – Checklists can be on any topic of interest to your readers.
- *Employee News* – Recognition of employee achievement can emphasize the hardworking nature of your company. Employee profiles can also function to increase employee loyalty.
- *Financial News* – Messages to stockholders or fund raising events, quarterly profits and sales etc. can help

keep your investors feeling informed.

- *General How-to Information* – How-to articles can provide guidance to solving a variety of problems of interest to your readers. These kinds of articles do not push company products. Instead, they function to increase the news value of your newsletter and thus add to its overall credibility.
- *General News* – General news articles can provide information on virtually any subject that might be of interest to your reader. However, make sure they reinforce the goals of your newsletter and do not stray to far from your main theme.
- *How-to-Solve Problem Articles* – How-

*Articles can feature important people involved in your business, people who influence your business, or everyday users of your product or service.*

to-solve problem articles can feature your product or service, or related products and services, and how they can be used to provide a solution to a problem of interest to your readers.

- *Ideas and Application Notes* – Ideas and application notes can show your readers tips on how to get the most out of your product or service.
- *Industry Updates* – Industry updates can feature technology changes and new technological advances, especially as they apply to the future of your product offerings.
- *Interviews and Profiles* – Articles can feature important people involved in

your business, people who influence your business, or everyday users of your product or service.

- *Price Updates* – Price updates help inform your clients on fee increases, discounts and other terms as they apply to your business.
- *Product & Service Stories* – Product and service editorials can include information on: benefits, features, how your product works descriptions, product selection guides, support information, services offered, and next step instructions.
- *Product & Service Information* – Product and service information articles can be used to help keep your customers and clients informed about

*Profiles of leaders in your organization can help bolster your credibility.*

**SUPERTIP**

product availability, models, sizes, material of construction, changes in technical specifications, manufacturing processes, and any future developments.

- *Product Histories* – Product histories can be used to feature the developmental history of some of your key products. These kinds of articles are excellent forums for promoting your commitment to quality and excellence
- *Question & Answer Sections* – Question and answer sections allow readers to send in their problems and your experts to give sound advice on how to solve those problems. Giving advice and answering question to real consumer problems helps you to be

perceived as an expert in your field.

- *Quotes* – Interesting quotes from famous people or company clients or members, can add entertainment value to your newsletter.
- *Upcoming Events* – A calendar of upcoming events can provide information at a glance that will be of interest to your readers. Upcoming events can include seminar announcements, trade shows, meetings or new product releases.
- *Writer's or Author's Biographies* – At the end or beginning of an article, you might want to list the author's background credentials. This is especially important if the author is providing technical data supportive of

*A calendar of upcoming events can provide information at a glance that will be of interest to your readers.*

the benefits of using your products or services.

**Specialized Sections** – Specialized sections add excitement and character to a newsletter. They also can separate your newsletter from the competition. Examples are listed below:

- *Awareness Day* – Have a “Green Earth Day” where all the articles in your newsletter are positive and life re-affirming.
- *Classifieds* – Offer a free classified section for your newsletter customers. Set up an answering service or phone machine to collect these ads.
- *General Announcements* – A general announcement section can be run as a



regular column or boxed in to form a sidebar. Topics can include job placement, promotions and new trends, as well as new product and service ideas.

- *Gift of the Month Club* – Start a “Gift of the Month Club” to introduce special products, move obsolete items or liquidate overstocked inventory. Gift of the month products are usually offered at bargain prices or in the form of “surprise packages.”
- *In “Next Issue”* – Have a section that outlines stories in upcoming newsletters.
- *In “This Issue”* – Have a column style table of contents.

*Have a catalog section that shows your new products as well as the products of other businesses related to yours.*

- *Letter’s to the Editor* – Have a section that publishes letters people send in.
  - *President’s Perspective* – Have a section that highlights opinions and insights from the president of the company.
  - *Product News Releases* – Have a catalog section that shows your new products as well as the products of other businesses related to yours.
- NOTE** Refrain from aggressively pushing your products in your newsletter at every opportunity you get. Being reserved at times can help you build trust and credibility.
- *Professional Corner or Ann Lander’s Type Section* – Answering letters from

your clients or customers about certain products, services or any general topic of interest to your readers, is a great way to open communication channels and learn new ways to improve your company operations.

**Visuals** – Although visuals aren't as important in a newsletter as they are in other forms of advertising, and given the fact that too fancy a publication distracts from the content of a newsletter, it is nevertheless a good idea to incorporate visuals into your newsletter to add interest as well as provide information words cannot describe.

Below are some tips on what kinds of visuals you should choose.

- *Accent Artwork* – Accent art, also

known as clip art, are pre-drawn illustrations that can be used to spice up a newsletter. Vast libraries of clip art are available on CD-ROM diskettes.

*There is not one whom we employ who does not, like ourselves, desire recognition, praise, gentleness, forbearance, patience.*  
**HENRY WARD BEECHER**

- *Charts, Graphs and Tables* – Charts, graphs and tables can be used to simplify complex information that would otherwise take up too much copy to explain. Sometimes it's not how much you say but how little you need to say in order to get across your point. However, don't use a graph, table or chart, unless your ad content requires it. It is confusing to the reader to include a graph, table or chart that doesn't really relate to the content of the articles that surround it.

- *Illustration Callouts* – Illustration callouts are labels used to identify the various parts of an illustration or photo.
- *Mug Shots* – Photographs of the editor of the newsletter, president of the company or even the writer of an article, can be used to give your newsletter a more personal feeling.
- *Photos* – Photographs used in newsletters don't have to be in color. However, they should be of the highest quality possible.

*It is especially important to have a good visual on the front page of your newsletter.*

**NOTE** Remember, the resolution and clarity of photographs are always reduced whenever they are mass produced.

- *Primary Artwork* – Hand drawn and computer-generated illustrations can be

used to help explain the parts of a particular product, often to better effect than photographs.

- *Primary Visuals* – When appropriate, articles should be accompanied by photographs, illustrations or charts and diagrams. With desktop publishing, this is relatively an easy task. You can scan photographs and artwork, and manipulate and re-size them on your computer screen so you know exactly how they will fit on a finished page.

**NOTE** It is especially important to have a good visual on the front page of your newsletter. However, keep in mind that this visual should not be so powerful as to detract from the content of the articles.

**Well-Organized Body Text** – Body text, provides the core of the newsletter. To help make them more readable, use the following body text structuring aids:

- *Article End Signs* – These symbols are used to indicate the end of an article. They can be found in the extended character sets of many typefaces. Ideally, the symbol should relate to the theme of the newsletter e.g., ❖ ✍️ 🖨️.
- *Byline or Author Identification* – A byline identifies the author or an article. It may appear after the headline or at the end of an article.
- *Jumplines* – A jumpline is a line of text indicating the page on which an article continued. Its counterpart on the continuation page is a carryover line

*Kickers are short phrases that summarize your headline and tease readers into reading your body copy.*

identifying the story that is being continued. Jumplines and carryover lines help readers locate articles continued on different pages or find out where an article began.

- *Kickers* – Kickers are short phrases that summarize your headline and tease readers into reading your body copy. Although often used in direct mail advertising, their use in newsletters should be controlled.
- *Pull Quotes* – A pull quote, also called a breakout, blurb or callout, is a sentence or passage excerpted from the body copy and set in large type. It is used to summarize or emphasize important points in an article, give a preview of the articles

contents, or draw a reader's attention to a point within an article. Pull quotes usually appear close to the place in the article from which the quote is taken.

**NOTE** Pull quotes don't have to be actual quotes, but they should be at least an edited version of the article copy. Pull quotes can also be used to fill space, or be used to graphically balance a page.

- **Side Bars** – A sidebar is a smaller story inside a larger one (an article within an article), boxed with its own headline to set it apart from the main text. The content of the sidebar supplements the longer article to provide added detail or perspective. Sidebars can be positioned anywhere on the page.

*Pull quotes don't have to be actual quotes, but they should be at least an edited version of the article copy.*

## Newsletters

### Promote Action with . . .

**Call to Action Statements** – If you want the reader of your newsletter to do something specific, like order a new updated version of your software, make sure you ask them. The best place to do this is on the first or last page.

**Coupons and Order Forms** – Put your coupon or order form on the back part of your newsletter, so if it is cut out, nothing important is missing. Consider adding a newsletter insert order form, rather than including the order form on the newsletter.

### Company Address & Telephone

**Numbers** – Make it easy for your clients to write, phone or Fax you, whichever you prefer.

**Mini One or Two Page Catalog Sections** – Have pictures, prices and factually based product descriptions.

**Price & Payment Options** – State clearly how you accept customers to pay for subscriptions or products advertised in the newsletter, whether by credit card or check.

### Newsletter Design Tips

Use the following strategies to improve and refine your basic newsletter design techniques:

**Always make your newsletters informative.** To succeed, a newsletter must not contain too much advertising material. Rather it must have enough useful information to persuade the reader to read the entire newsletter. A newsletter must also

never seem like a brochure or ad. Rather, people must look forward to reading them for content not to look at their pictures.

**Choose the best way to fold your newsletter.** To make your newsletter easier to mail, you may decide to fold them three ways like a brochure or in half like a newspaper. Otherwise, you should leave them alone as creases in the paper reduce readability.

**Choose the standard 8.5 by 11 inch size.** All newsletters should be printed on 8.5” by 11” paper. Forget being novel or different. A four-page newsletter this size can easily be created by folding one 11 by 17 inch paper in half. 8, 12 and 16 page newsletters can also be similarly created. To keep the pages together

*All newsletters should be printed on 8.5” by 11” paper.*

for long newsletters, use staples. For short ones, consider leaving them loose.

**Choose the right editorial style.** Your editorial style should appeal to your readership and at the same time promote your company. To do this, follow these guidelines:

- *Avoid controversial topics* – Avoid scrupulously, jesting or discussions involving religion, politics, sex, disarmament, world conflicts and any controversial issue not related to your area.
- *Encourage reader input* – Involve readers as much as possible. Invite comments letters and questions. Consider having a few select readers write a guest editorial.

*Your editorial style should appeal to your readership, and at the same time promote your company.*

- *Never make anyone but yourself the butt of a humorous story* – If that is not possible, make the person anonymous or fictitious.
- *Spell names correctly* – When you mention a specific individual, be sure to get his or her name spelled correctly and title accurately identified. Individuals can be quite sensitive about these matters.
- *Write about people not things* – Info about things is rarely as interesting as info about people.

**Choose the right grid.** To maintain consistency, your newsletter should be based on a one to 5 or 6 column grid. 2-column grids limit your choice in type size because of their width. 3-column grids offer more

variety of type and more opportunities to use visual and reader cues. 4- or 5-column grids offer greater flexibility in combining grids.

**NOTE** Page by page consistency helps the reader organize information. White space more than anything else helps achieve this. Grids give you white space consistency and this consistency aids reading (white space should be left at the top, bottom and sides of a grid).

**Collect ideas and copy other types of newsletter structures.** Start collecting newsletters of all kinds. Build a newsletter file so you can take advantage of any innovative ideas other newsletter publishers come up with. Use these files to

*Page by page consistency helps the reader organize information.*

help you structure and design your newsletter when you run out of your own ideas.

### **Determine the right percentage of editorial, promotional and organization content for your newsletter.**

Depending on whether your audience is consumer or institutional, use the following guidelines to determine content:

- *Content of a Consumer Newsletter* – For a newsletter aimed at a consumer audience, devote not less than one-third of the content to true newsletter editorial material. That leaves you with two-thirds of the newsletter that can be devoted to selling your organization, as well as its products and services. Even then, you are likely to benefit more by



devoting at least part of the remaining two-thirds to soft sell material. In other words, material that promotes what you sell in the general terms of describing benefits produced by your products or service, with application oriented explanations.

*Content of an Institutional Newsletter* – For a newsletter aimed at employees in a company or members in an organization, devote not less than 50% of the content to information about the organiza-

tion – local, national and international. The remaining half should be split three ways: 20% employee information regarding topics like benefits and quality of working life; 20% relevant non-company information regarding such topics as competitors and

*More than 90% of all newsletter subscription recruiting is done through direct mail. The response rates are in the 0.5 percent to two percent range.*  
**FUNFACT**

community; and 10% small talk and personals.

**Don't take the fun out of writing your newsletter by setting unrealistic deadlines.** If meeting the deadline of a

weekly or monthly newsletter is too punishing, resulting in an overall reduction or quality, reduce the publishing to bi-monthly or quarterly editions.

**Use irregular column endings to lighten up and add contrast to a layout.** Irregular columns create varying amounts

of white space at the bottom of each page. They also speed up production, since no one has to labor over lining up column endings.

## Newsletter Promotion Tips

Use the following strategies to improve and refine your newsletter promotions:

**Clearly define the purpose of your newsletter.** To help you pinpoint the promotional goals of your newsletter, ask yourself the following:

The purpose of my newsletter is to . . .

- advertise new products
- analyze and interpret recent events in depth
- create and maintain enthusiasm for association or firm goals
- inform members about upcoming events
- recognize individual employee or

member achievement

- showcase recent firm or association activities

**If your newsletter is a self-mailer, leave blank spaces to put your customer's address.** If your newsletter is a self-mailer (sent via mail without being enclosed in an envelope), the back page should contain blank space for an address label, as well as return address information. Often, a pre-printed postmark is included.

**NOTE** Getting a postal permit number can save you time. You can print your bulk mail information right on the address panel. This way, you won't have to waste time licking stamps.



*Clearly define the purpose of your newsletter.*

## Types of Newsletters

**Institutional Newsletters** – Also known as vertical publications, institutional newsletters are distributed internally within associations, community groups, companies and other large organizations.

**Association Newsletters** – These kinds of newsletters help a scattered membership with a common interest keep in touch. Profit and nonprofit organizations, as well as many trade associations, publish such newsletters.

**Community Group Newsletters** – These kinds of newsletters are often used by civic organizations to keep in touch with members, announce meetings, and stimulate attendance at events.

**Company Newsletters** – These kinds of newsletters are perhaps the most common type and are usually distributed among employees and/or executives. They are designed to give employees and members a feeling of belonging and to keep them abreast of important changes within the organization.

**Consumer Newsletters** – Also known as horizontal publications, consumer newsletters are distributed to specialized consumer and business markets. Within this category, there are three basic types of newsletters:

**Publicity Newsletters** – These kinds of newsletters often create their own readers. They can be developed for fan clubs, resorts and politicians.

**Special Interest Newsletters** – These kinds of newsletters are developed by special-interest groups. They tend to grow and shrink with their following.

**Self-interest or Digest Newsletters** – These kinds of newsletters are designed to make a profit. The individuals or groups who develop them typically offer advice or present solutions to problems held in common by their target readers.

## Getting Your Newsletter Printed

**MOST NEWSLETTERS CAN** be printed using a 600 dot per inch laser printer. However, some newsletter publishers go a step further. After proofing their work on a laser printer, they take their disks to a high-resolution phototypesetter.

**Using a Phototypesetter** – Few newsletter publishers own their own phototypesetter, because of the cost. Instead, they rent time on them at a service bureau. High-resolution phototypesetting increases the crispness of the letters and makes background shades appear smooth. It also makes it easier to include bleeds and photographs. Output from a 2540 dot per inch Linotronic typesetter reflects the quality capabilities of today's finest scanners and image editing software. Most service bureaus offer 24 or 48-hour turnaround.

**NOTE** If you are limited to 300 dot per inch laser printer, you should avoid using gray screened backgrounds or screened letters.

**What kind of paper should you use?** If your newsletter costs more than a hundred dollars a year, then you need to produce a professional looking document. Since the advantages of high-resolution output are lost when newsletters are printed on porous paper – type and graphics can bleed on newsprint – you need to choose a higher quality paper, possible one specially designed for high-resolution printing.

## PREPARING A DIRECT MAIL PROMOTION

DIRECT MAIL is perhaps one of the most effective ways to target a market. However, DM can be very costly, especially if the promotion is poorly conceived. Furthermore, if your market is poorly targeted, your beautiful slick 5-piece direct mail package becomes morphed into that ignominious evil twin – **Junk Mail**.

**Direct Mail  
Grabs Attention with . . .**

**Carefully Designed Outside Envelopes** – The outside envelope of your DM promotion conditions your audience to receive your message. It is like the clothing a salesperson wears. And since it is the first

*Direct mail is one on of the fastest growing forms of advertising.*  
**FUNFACT**

thing a prospect will see, it is likely a judgment will be made before even one word is read. More simple put, your outside envelope sets the stage – to be tossed in the garbage or eagerly opened.

To get your DM opened, consider making your outer envelope resemble an invoice, telegram, or other official looking document. People usually open such envelopes. Or use a plain outer envelope with no copy, not even a return address. The mystery of such a mailing is irresistible.

Personalized letters, with the recipients name typed on the envelope, are also judged more important than other kinds of envelopes. On the other hand, an envelope with a clear plastic window outlining the customer's name and address on

the letter inside, can save you letter handling – it avoids the extra step of labeling the letter – but is more likely to be perceived as junk mail.

**NOTE** Envelopes addressed with labels are just as effective as envelopes individually typed with the recipient's address. Envelopes addressed by hand may get opened, but do not get good response rates.

### Questions that go through a prospects mind when he or she first looks at your outside envelope . . .

- Who is this from?
- What is this about?
- Is this someone I can trust?
- Should I be on my guard against being

*Consider using the envelope itself to feature one or more special offers.*

pushed into doing something I don't want to do?

- Am I going to have to listen to a high-pressure pitch?
- Is opening this worth my time?

**Envelope Advertising** – Consider using the envelope itself to feature one or more special offers. The additional printing cost could prove insignificant compared to the extra sales produced.

**Envelope Callouts** – An envelope callout acts like a headline, but can also be used to perform more specific functions. For example, you can use your callout to describe the exact person you're trying to reach e.g., "Attention buyers of electronic

components . . . important information inside.”

**Envelope Teaser Copy** – Include “teaser copy” on your outer envelope to entice the customer to look inside. However, use teaser copy only if it contains an irresistible message that will compel the reader to open the envelope. Otherwise forget it. You’re just wasting ink.

**Direct Mail Injects  
Desire with . . .**

**Compelling Sales Letter Copy** – The sales letter can be one of your most effective selling tools in a DM promotion – personal and persuasive like a

## Selecting the Right Type of Direct Mail Package

**THE DIRECT MAIL PACKAGE** you choose will depend on its cost as well as its ability to grab the interest of your targeted prospect. Five basic DM packages are listed below.

*Single Piece Mailer* – Has a built-in envelope that the customer can detach and mail. Self-mailers are cheaper to produce, but they practically never out-pull envelope enclosed letter mailings.

*Two-Piece Mailer* – Consists of an envelope and a letter.

*Three-Piece Mailer* – Consists of an envelope, a letter, and a BRC or return envelope.

*Traditional Four-Piece Mailer* – Traditional direct mail promotions include a mailing envelope or card (preferably postpaid and self-addressed) a personalized cover letter, and a detailed brochure, folder, or insert. This type of DM package is the one most often used.

*Fancy Four-Piece Mailer* – Consists of a six by nine outside envelope featuring an engraving of an old-fashioned locomotive then a teaser to open the envelope; a letter inside, a BRC card and a brochure or mini-catalog.

one-on-one sales pitch, yet without the pressure that can force a customer to keep his guard up. To write a sales letter, follow the guidelines below (see the two examples at the end of this Guidebook):

- **Headlines & Salutations** – You don't have to begin a letter with a salutation such as, Dear Customer or Dear Friend. A catchy headline across the top of the page can also be used to grab the reader's attention. In fact, it has been proven that a form letter with a good headline is just as effective as a form letter with the recipient's name and address typed in by hand (see Guidebook #59 for a list of possible salutations).

*You don't have to begin a letter with a salutation such as, Dear Customer or Dear Friend. A catchy headline across the top of the page can also be used to grab the reader's attention.*

**NOTE** To keep your sales letter more personal, avoid using headlines. Of course, you could always use both.

- **First Line or Lead-in of Sales Letter** –

The lead of a sales letter can be used to screen out whether a person is interested or not.

However, overall it should function like a headline to attract attention, generate curiosity, and get the reader to read more.

**NOTE** Once the lead has been completed, the role of the remaining part of the letter is to answer questions that remain unanswered – things a prospect need to know before he or she can agree to say “yes” to your proposal. Rightaway, adopt a natural, unstilted writing style that follows every day



speech patterns.

- *Benefit Statements* – Benefit statements can be used in your body copy (separated by indents) to describe what the product or service will do for the person who buys it.

**NOTE** Never lose a opportunity to highlight your products strongest selling point.

- *Benefit Subheads* – Benefit subheads can be used to cue readers who scan your sales letter then go back and read in more detail which benefits interest them.
- *Testimonials* – People love hearing about other people’s experiences. Authentic testimonials in a sales letter greatly increase the pulling power of the

*A Johnson Box is a summary of your offer.*

letter.

- *Johnson Box* – A Johnson Box is a summary of your offer. It functions like a sidebar and can be used at the beginning or end of a letter.
- *Post Script* – Always use a P.S. in a DM letter, it is the second most read part of a letter. Use it to repeat your offer, highlight your strongest benefit, reinforce an important idea, or even make a special time sensitive offer. Though not everyone will read your entire letter, 80% will read your P.S. statement.

**Enclosures** – Desire injecting enclosures include catalog sheets, samples, demonstration devices, flip charts, brochures, circulars, order forms or even single sheet flyers printed on one side only.

- **Brochures** – Brochures can be added to your DM promotion as half page, third page or full page folders.
- **Flyers** – Use a flyer when you are selling products that are colorful or visually impressive and perhaps need a step by step series of demonstration photos. Remember, the flyer tells, the sales letter sells.

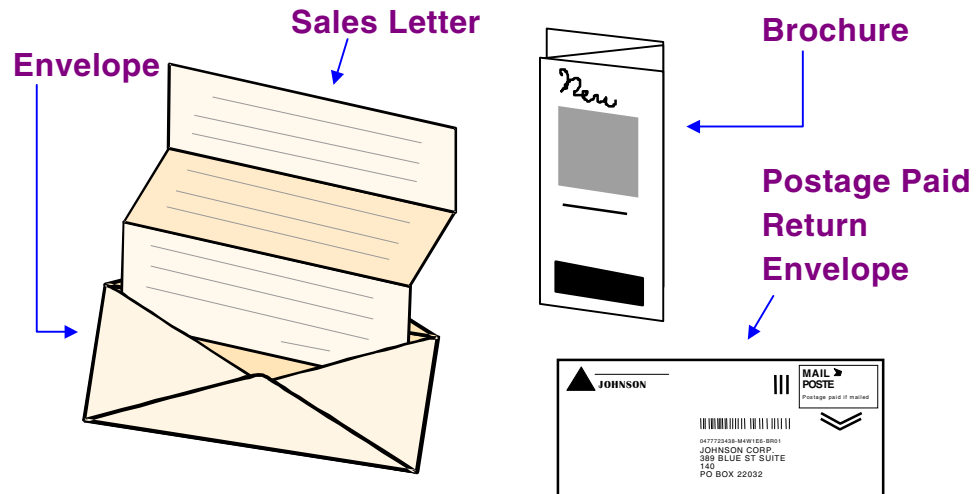
## Direct Mail Promotes Action with . . .

### Business Reply Cards

– Using a Business Reply Card (BRC) like the example shown on the right will generate a much bet-

ter response than cards or envelopes that require a postage stamp from the prospect. In fact, a print ad with a bind-in BRC card will outpull the same ad without a bind-in up to 600 percent.

## Parts of a 4-piece DM Promotion



Another advantage of using a BRC is that when you get it back from the person you mailed it to, you know exactly what it is for, thus increasing the speed in which you can process the order or inquiry. When designing your BRC, make sure that it looks positive, restates your guarantee and calls the reader to action with statements like “YES,” and “Order Today.” The BRC should also have the complete information about the product being offered (sometimes the BRC is all the consumer saves for future ordering).

**NOTE** Remember, you only pay postage for the actual BRCs returned to you.

*A preprinted postage permit or postage metered envelope outpulls an envelope with stamps.*  
**SUPERTIP**

**Call to Action Statements** – Use the following call to action statement to spice up your DM sales letter:

- If you want people to order state: “Order our new Pocket Fisher today!”
- If you think they won’t want to order right away, tell them to, “Tack up our order form on your fridge so you won’t lose it;” or “If you don’t order today look for our product in the future.”
- If you are promoting your product at retail location, tell the reader to, “Clip out our coupon and hand it to the sales clerk for a 15% discount.”
- If you want the reader to call, highlight your toll-free number in large type, and

tell them, “Call today, and you will receive a free widget.”

### Company Contacting Information –

State your company name, address, and phone number at least twice.

**NOTE** If you’re promoting a hotel, retail location, or tourist attraction, include an easy-to-follow map.

### Deadlines and Limited Time Offers –

Once your readers put your letter aside, they probably won’t come back to it, so you’ll get the most responses if you urge them to act right away. To urge them to act, state a time limit on the offer. Say, “This offer expires Jan. 1st.”

Providing a “cut-off” date for orders creates a sense of urgency. An added benefit

is that you can anticipate when the bulk of your order will come in.

You can also hint that the offer won’t last forever with statements like, “But hurry supplies are limited.” Or, you can add a sense of urgency to your call for action with statements like, “Remember the time to buy insurance is before tragedy strikes.”

**Guarantees** – Tell your buyers exactly what you will do if they are unsatisfied with their purchase. And make sure that this guarantee is prominently displayed.

**NOTE** For mail order, a 30-day money-back guarantee is required by law.

**Order Forms** – An order form can be placed on a single card about 4 x 8 inches

*Tell your buyers exactly what you will do if they are unsatisfied with their purchase. And make sure that this guarantee is prominently displayed.*

to fit perfectly in a standard #10 envelope. An order form can also be placed on a BRC (example on the right). Another option is to avoid having an ordering form altogether, and instead writing an ordering section that includes a toll-free number in large bold letters and specific instructions on how to place an order.

**NOTE** An order form printed in color or designed as an elaborate certificate, or printed with a lot of information outpulls a clean ordinary looking order form. Likewise, an order form or reply card with a tear-off stub or receipt generates more response than those without.

**Price and Payment Options** – The more options you give people, the more likely they will respond.

The image shows a business reply card template. At the top right, there are four vertical bars of varying heights. To their right is a box containing the text: "NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES". Below this is a central box with the text: "BUSINESS REPLY CARD" in large purple letters, followed by "FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 22,489 PHILADELPHIA, PA" in smaller black letters. Below this box is the text: "POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE". In the center, the company name "North American Publishing Co." is printed in bold, followed by the address: "401 North Broad St. Philadelphia, PA 19108". To the right of the address are five thick horizontal black bars. At the bottom of the card is a series of vertical bars of varying heights, similar to a barcode.

*You'll Save A Lot of Time, Trouble and Money With This Book.*  
**“HOW TO BEAT THE STOCK MARKET”**  
 by Marvin Jackson \$21.00

( ) Yes, please send me a copy. I understand that if I am not completely satisfied, I may return it to you for a full refund.

My Check is enclosed (Sorry, no C.O.D.'s)      Credit Card No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 American Express      Bank No \_\_\_\_\_  
 Master Charge      Card Expires \_\_\_\_\_  
 Diners Club       Vise      Signature \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ (Please Print)      8H4T5  
 COMPANY \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

NO-RISK  
 GUARANTEE  
 Full 30-day refund

### Self-addressed, Postage Paid Envelopes

– Like a BRC, including a self-addressed postage paid envelope increases response. However, the advantage of using such a format is that your customers can now send you checks – with a BRC you are limited to selling via credit cards. Furthermore, providing self-addressed envelopes gives your customers more privacy. This is important if the information contained on the ordering form is confidential and potentially embarrassing to the customer.

*Don't be afraid to repeat yourself. You never know what part of a promotion your prospect will read.*

**Stamps** – Including postage stamps on your reply card, is only practical in limited quantity mailings where you expect the response rate to be high. Although the response rate is higher than BRCs, you have to factor in the added costs of all the

stamps you have given away to people who won't reply. Remember, some people will open your envelope, holler “Ya hoo,” cut off the stamps and throw away your order form. Others will shake their head thinking how desperate you are for business.

**NOTE** Response rates using this technique tend to be higher because people feel guiltier if they don't reply. They imagine you carefully licking each stamp and this dedication impresses them.

**Statements that Repeat Your Main Offer** – Don't be afraid to repeat yourself. You never know what part of a promotion your prospect will read so you want to make sure you repeat your offer

and benefits through out your brochure or sales letter.

## Direct Mail Writing Tips

Use the following strategies to improve and refine your basic direct mail writing techniques (see sample on **page 61** and **62**):

**Always design your order form first.** An order form is the single most important element of your package and one of the most frequently overlooked by many direct marketers. To design a good DM order form:

- word the offer so that it is easy to understand
- repeat important selling points

*It is difficult to prove the actual amount of money spent annually on direct mail (postage is the major expense), but the total probably comes close to \$10 billion.*

### **FUNFACT**

- make it easy to fill out
- be sure to leave enough space on the form for the reader to fill in the required information (a surprising amount of coupons are too cramped)

**Avoid legal or intimidating language.** State your offer, terms, and guarantee in plain English.

**Be creative.** The blessing of DM is that there are no set rules for form or content. DM is a creative, dynamic field. Don't be afraid to try new things. As long as you maintain your control, package and carefully test new formats against tired and true packages, you can't lose.

**Brainstorm before you write your sales letter.** Before you actually sit down

and write your sales letter, list everything you know about your product or service. As well, list everything you want to say about your product or service.

**Build excitement.** Good DM sells by building excitement. Excitement is developed through facts, information and education, not hype or exaggeration.

**Choose the best way to start your letter.** There are many ways to start a DM letter, limited only by your imagination. However, here are 15 good old standbys with examples:

- *Arouse curiosity* – “I want to tell you something very important. But not right away. First I have to earn my money, you know from the guys who paid me to write this letter.”

*“Yes it’s true I got your name from a list, but the list I got you from is special.”*

- *Ask a question* – “If your best friend was in financial trouble, could you lend him a month’s rent?”
- *Flatter your reader* – “Yes it’s true I got your name from a list, but the list I got you from is special. You see, people in your group have superior characteristics that set them apart from others. That’s why I’m writing to you. Isn’t it about time someone told you how smart you are! Well now that I’ve flattered you silly, I want to let you in on a little secret . . . you look marvelous too. Sure I’ve never really seen you before, but remember it’s inner beauty that counts.”
- *Identify your reader’s problem* – “Are you feeling a little tired and wish you



had more energy?”

- *Make an announcement* – “What you are about to read concerns the biggest breakthrough in medical history.”
- *Make it personal* – “Dear Mr. Smith, we’ve just written a book called . . . .”
- *Offer free inside information* – “Inside this letter are three facts, that once you read them, your life will never be the same.”
- *State your offer* – “For one day only, August 15th, Crazy Kelly’s Stereo House is offering 20% off every item in the store. This offer is only for people who have received this letter.”
- *Stress a benefit* – “No more cold feet.

*Don’t neglect your outside envelope – it’s the first thing the customer sees and deserves your utmost attention.*

**SUPERTIP**

No more pulling on socks. Once you’ve slipped on Dimpy’s sheep skin slippers, your toes will thank you for life.”

- *Tell a story* – “Greg Lamar was an average man, of average height, and of average weight. He had three kids, an adorable wife, and a pet dog called Grumpy. All and all, he led an average life until one day . . . .”
- *Use a provocative quote* – “Fish and guests smell after three days.”
- *Use the word YOU* – “You will never forget what you are now about to read. How can I be so sure? Because, I use to be like you. I use to be a skeptic. I use to laugh at all the stupid things people would do to make

themselves beautiful. Until one day, I tried . . . .”

- *Use human interest* – “In the U.S. alone, every year more than 1,000,000 people start a new business. In six years, 85,000 of those 1,000,000 entrepreneurs will become millionaires.”
- *Write a personal message from the president* – “This is Bill Jackson, president of Wilmore Jewelers. I’m writing to tell you that I’m going bankrupt. But don’t worry . . . I’m not going to ask you for a loan. You see. I have to sell all my 18 carat gold, \$1 million dollars worth of inventory, by September 19th.”
- *Write to the reader peer-to-peer* – “I

know what you’re thinking. Who is this guy Jeff Gramit? Why did he write to me? What does he want from me? Is he an old friend from college?

*“This is Bill Jackson, president of Wilmore Jewelers. I’m writing to tell you that I’m going bankrupt. But don’t worry . . . I’m not going to ask you for a loan.”*

**Choose the right length for your sales letter.** Some sales letters exhibit a dreadful tendency to run on at great length – six or eight page sales letter are not uncommon – but such voluminous epistles can only tax a reader’s patience. Better to drive home your point within a page or two and at most four. Use circulars, flyers and brochures to add information.

**NOTE** A two-page letter normally outpulls a one-page letter.

**Copy the basic structure and style of successful direct mail letters.** To design a winning DM sales letter:

- go to the library and look through collections of award winning DM letters
- start saving all the DM letters you receive
- ask your friends for theirs
- visit local businesses in your field to see if they will share any they have
- find out which of these sales letters have been the most successful

Once you have your hands on a dozen winners, especially if they are related to the area you want to target, study them. Compare their headlines, opening lines,

content, offers, calls to action, postscripts and benefit statements. Cut up their parts, change a few words, scramble a few sentences and use them to make a rough copy of your own letter.

**NOTE** Keep a file of what you consider to be “outstanding” sales letters.

*Don't be a slave to grammar and punctuation rules.*

**Create a feeling of exclusivity about your offer.** To create a feeling of exclusivity use language to the effect of, “this offer is non-transferable, “Sorry, this special price is available to past customers only.”

**Don't be a slave to grammar and punctuation rules.** The goal of direct mail is to communicate a sales message. If you must choose between a familiar phrase or a grammatically correct but

stilted one, chose the familiar phrase every time. Communication is the key.

**Don't oversell or undersell.** When writing your DM sales letter, keep in mind your buyer's level of interest. This will help you not to oversell or undersell your offer.

### **Format your letter properly.**

There is no real set format for a DM sales letter. However, here a few guidelines you should follow:

- give your letter instant readability by using use white space whenever possible
- pick an appropriate color of paper for your particular audience
- set certain material apart from other parts by varying the width of your

*Form letters using indented paragraphs will usually outpull those in which paragraphs are not indented.*

margins to create visual interest

- underline words for emphasis, but don't overdo it (underlining important phrases and sentences usually increases results slightly)
  - use a good quality typewriter, quality printer, or laser printer
  - use headlines through your letter
  - use short paragraphs 6-7 lines
  - use wide margins, inch and a half on each side

**NOTE** Form letters using indented paragraphs will usually outpull those in which paragraphs are not indented.

**Give people choices.** Write your "call to action" so that readers ask themselves which one, rather than "should I" or

shouldn't I." Also say things like: "Yes, I'd like to know how I can cut my phone bill in half." "Please send literature on your long-distance service. "I understand I'm under no obligation and that no salesman will call."

### **Give prospects the option of making a negative response.**

Giving a DM recipient the option of saying "no" can work to your advantage. Here's how: A reply card for a letter promoting your consulting service can give your reader the option of checking off a box that reads, "not interested right now. But try us again in \_\_\_\_ (month/year)." Even if the reader doesn't need your services right away, he or she can still respond to your mailing.

*In Direct Mail, you must always remind the customer that you are an expert in your field.*

**Have an actual person in mind.** All professionals in the direct mail business find it nearly impossible to create a winning package, if they don't know everything there is to know about the human being they are writing to. In other words, as a

professional, although you may *mail* to millions, *write* to one individual – the person you're convinced is the best prospect and the most likely to respond to your offer.

**NOTE** Writing in a vacuum cries for air.

**Make copy long enough.** When writing copy use as much space as you need to clearly and completely convey your offer and product benefits. A letter must give every reason to buy that could possibly arise in a reader's mind, and answer

every reason not to buy. In general, long copy in a DM sales letter outpulls short copy.

**Personalize your copy.** Mention your potential customer's name; talk about their needs; use words like you, yours, I and we.

**Remind the customers you are the expert in your field.** In Direct Mail, you must always remind the customer that you are an expert in your field. When you specialize in gourmet cookware, you must create the feeling that you know more about gourmet cooking than anybody else.

**Use ODaC to write your sales letter.**

The following is a simplified example of how you can use ODaC to write a DM

*Let the flyer do the telling and the letter do the selling.*

**DM SAYING**

sales letter (see Guidebook # 62 for more details):

**FIRST**, research:

- old copy, results from previous mailings, competitor's copy
  - vendors data
  - specification sheets
  - editorial references (every time your product is mentioned in the news
  - sales records

List all the benefits of your product or service. Find your greatest benefit.

**SECOND**, Use ODaC to:

- *Grab attention* by making a headline out of your greatest benefit that leads into

your first paragraph.

- *Inject desire* by developing this benefit along with a few others of a complementary nature by proving and supporting them with facts.
- *Promote action* by straightforwardly asking for the customer's order. Tell them exactly what they have to do to place that order.

**Use real signatures.** If possible, sign all your DM letters (within reason of course). Photocopied or printed signatures don't have the same impact.

**NOTE** In the least, use a different colored ink for the signature. Blue ink looks the most like a real signature.

*Edit for "stoppers." Stoppers are words and phrases that are awkward, too contrived, out of the ordinary.*

**Use the following checklist  to improve your DM sales letter.** The following is a 39-point checklist for writing better sales letter copy:

### OPENING

- Are there any "thats" you don't need?* "Thats" can often be removed without any loss of meaning. If left in, they act like brakes and slow the letter down.
- Are there any places where you have strung together too many prepositional phrases?* Too many prepositional phrases makes your writing seem amateurish.
- Are there any sentences which begin with an article (a, an, or the) where you might have avoided it?* Make every word sell. If you don't really need it, cut

it out.

- ❑ *Are there any sentences with wandering verbs?* Verbs should be as close as possible to their subjects.
- ❑ *Are there any sentences filled with advertising puffery.* Puffery is a word used to describe advertising bull !#!^.
- ❑ *Are there any sentences containing awkward statements?* Edit for “stoppers.” *Stoppers* are words and phrases that are awkward, too contrived, out of the ordinary. They hold up your reader and interrupt the rhythm of a piece that otherwise flows smoothly from one idea to another.
- ❑ *Are there any sentences containing perfectly obvious statements that make*

*you look dumb?* Statements that are perfectly obvious to your reader undermine your credibility as an expert.

- ❑ *Are your thoughts arranged in logical order?* It is a fundamental copywriting truth that your reader will try and anticipate what you are going to say next. If you take advantage of this, comprehension of your offer will increase. Therefore edit and order your thoughts e.g., from small to big, to bigger, to biggest; from then to now, to later, to the future; and by asking the question, “Does this follow that?”
- ❑ *Does your headline or lead sentence get attention and arouse desire?* To do this, you need to talk about things that interest your reader right away – avoid

*Make every word sell. If you don't really need it, cut it out.*



vague generalities. In fact, if your headline or lead sentence doesn't grab attention nor arouse desire, scrap it and write another one.

- ❑ *Does your lead sentence make its point in less than two lines?* Although there are many exceptions to the rule, a good lead sentence is two lines long.

- ❑ *Does your opening paragraph promise a benefit to the reader?* Lead with your best foot forward – your most important benefit. Ask yourself, what does the reader want to hear the most, and then give it to them.

- ❑ *Does your opening paragraph have a*

*In business mail, the numbers are often not as critical as in consumer mail because the selling price of the item is usually much greater and the size of the mailing is smaller.*

### **SUPERTIP**

*good hook?* A good hook occurs a few sentences into a sales letter and is strong enough to keep the reader reading a few more paragraphs. A good

hook, goes straight for the jugular.

- ❑ *Does your opening paragraph clearly define your product?*

Fire your biggest gun first. Don't beat around the bush. Shoot for the bull's-eye. Clearly state the value of your product or service to the prospect, listing its best features and benefits if you have to.

- ❑ *Does your letter look the way you want it to?* A letter that looks like it has been prepared by a secretary, creates a more person to person feeling

than an advertisement-style letter. Avoid making your letter look like advertising copy.

## DEVELOPING

- ❑ *Does your copy have swing and movement?* All good letters have swing and movement (like a bucket brigade). This is created using good transitions from paragraph to paragraph and sentence to sentence.

*Simple words get read. Complicated words get skipped.*

**NOTE** Avoid paragraphs that stand all alone by themselves. Unless you want to purposely bring your bucket brigade to a halt.

- ❑ *Does your copy reflect the way your market thinks not the way you think?* If your audience is octogenarians in Orlando Florida, then you should become an octogenarian in Orlando Florida.

Pretend you're the recipient and write to yourself.

- ❑ *Does your letter have a conversational tone?* Your sales letter should adopt a natural, unstilted writing style that follows every day speech patterns. Write it like you say it. Don't worry about grammar. And don't concern yourself with punctuation either (we overuse it anyway). In other words, don't wordsmith every sentence. Make it human.

**NOTE** DM letters must be conversational but they don't have to ramble.

- ❑ *Does your letter have the "you" attitude all the way through?* Don't talk about your company, talk about your customer and his or her needs.

❑ *Does your letter score between 70 and 80 words of one syllable for every 100 words you write?* Simple words get read. Complicated words get skipped.

❑ *Have you answered every question and objective the buyer might have?* Become customer sensitive. Ask yourself questions and try and come up with objections your customers might have. Then try and figure out how to write persuasive answers or solutions.

❑ *Do you come across as being an expert in your field?* You must come across as knowing your subject thoroughly.

*The perfect DM mailing piece is credible, clear, crisp, succinct, easy to read and understand, has its message repeated more than once, contains a definite offer, and includes a money back guarantee.*

### **SUPERTIP**

❑ *Have you included testimonials?* If you can't get a testimonial, create a fictional character.

❑ *Have you made sure your letter isn't bursting with your own ego and pride?* Always think about what the reader wants to hear not what you want to say.

❑ *Is your copy complete?* Are all questions answered, especially obvious ones?

❑ *Is your copy concise?* There is a great temptation to overwrite, especially in direct mail. Moderation is a virtue in DM.

❑ *Is your copy enthusiastic?* Does it appear that the writer of the letter obviously believes in what he or she is

selling? Does it pump you up?

- ❑ *Is your copy entertaining?* Tell a funny story, be entertaining, weave a theme to make your point, play games any what that will help your cause.
- ❑ *Is your copy filled with action words?* DM sales letters should use action words as much as possible to create an upbeat feeling. Don't fill your copy with nouns. Fill it with verbs.
- ❑ *Is your copy honest?* Never tell a lie. Be honest, straightforward, up front, true.

**NOTE** Instant good copy, is created when you simply tell a story honestly.

- ❑ *Is your copy inspiring and flattering rather than condescending?* Never talk

down to your audience. Look them straight in the eye and aim directly. Better yet, look up to them.

- ❑ *Is your letter friendly?* Your sales letter should also be sincere and tactful.
- ❑ *Is what you say believable?* If not, get some more facts to make it believable.

*Don't fill your copy with nouns. Fill it with verbs.*

## CLOSING

- ❑ *Does your basic offer sound good?* The quality of your offer is the number one reason a certain percentage of your audience will respond and others won't. Fundamentally, it is the difference between success or failure.
- ❑ *Does the big idea behind your letter come across easily?* If people end up scratching their heads after reading

your letter, then you've failed big time. A good sales letter makes it easy for its readers to understand exactly what the letter is about and exactly what it is asking for with a minimum amount of effort. It also makes it easy for the reader to see why its offer is so much better than others.

- ❑ *Does your copy sell, sell and sell?* Or is it designed to impress the reader with your writing ability? If somebody says, "That's a great sales letter," you've got the wrong reaction. What you want to hear is, "That's a great product or service." I'd love to have it.
- ❑ *Does your copy tie in with your order form?* Have you made it clear how the reader is to order? Have you asked for

*If somebody says, "That's a great sales letter," you've got the wrong reaction. What you want to hear is, "That's a great product or service." I'd love to have it.*

their order? Always move your reader towards the order form. Always ask yourself, "Have I directed enough attention to my order form?"

- ❑ *Does your letter read like it's been carefully crafted.* Have you made sure to use the active voice instead of passive? Also, have you avoided using too many participles, split infinitives, and repeating your name too many times?
- ❑ *Have you asked for the order?* Since you've wasted no words explaining the benefits of your offer to your readers, it makes no sense to suddenly start beating around the bush when it comes time to asking them to order.

- ❑ *Have you remembered to include a postscript?* Remember, postscripts get read more than body copy. Use them to repeat the most important points of your sales letter and to encourage ordering.

### Direct Mail Promotion Tips

Generally speaking, to create an effective direct mail promotion, three things are needed:

- a current mailing list, preferably consisting of people who have dealt with direct mail before
- a product or service that is attractive to recipients and will get them to react favorably and quickly
- an expert DM specialist who can write a persuasive knock'em dead sales letter.

*Always be prepared to bounce back another offer with every order you receive.*

More specifically, use the following strategies to improve and refine your DM promotions.

**Always be prepared to bounce back another offer with every order you receive.** Have flyers, BRCs etc. available

to insert as orders are shipped out – key the inserts to your customers' areas of interest.

**Coordinate DM promotions with other advertising media.**

This can significantly increase response rates.

**Enclose a pre-print of an upcoming ad.** A pre-print of a forthcoming ad, accompanied by a letter and response form, will outpull a post-print mailing package by 50 percent, or more. This is especially true

if the product is unique and never before offered to anyone.

**NOTE** The reason this works is the excitement the customer feels about being the first in line to get a chance to buy a new product.

**Find a good mailing list.** All DM promotions start with a mailing list that targets the type of people who would most likely be interested in buying the product or service being promoted. Mass mailings do not work. Although most people hate receiving junk mail, they do LOVE receiving mail that fulfills one of their unmet needs.

To start a mailing list, you can either build a “house list” by doing research yourself and compiling the information on a computer, or you can purchase an “outside

*In DM, normally a 2 to 4 percent response is good.*

list” from a list broker or mailing organization. There are lists available for every specialized market segment imaginable (see Guidebook #50 “Building a List of Potential Customers”).

**If you solo an item, give an excellent illustration.** Then go over each one of its features in detail, as well as its construction. Satisfy the reader’s need to touch it. Tell how the object feels if possible. Does it feel high quality? Does it feel like it will last forever?

**Keep track of response rates.** In DM, normally a 2 to 4 percent response is good. In other words, if you mail 5,000 pieces you should get anywhere from 100 to 200 replies. If your DM package cost 50 cents per mailing, then you need to pull in

a profit of \$12.50 to \$25 per customer to breakeven.

### Keep your DM promotion simple.

When putting together a DM promotion, the KISS principle applies: Keep it simple stupid. In other words:

- don't use a \$20 word when you can use a \$1 word instead
- don't clutter your DM promotion with too many items that fall out of your envelope, all with too much writing on them
- organize all parts of your promotion into a well related easily digestible format

**NOTE** When your prospect opens up a poorly designed package with poorly coordinated parts, they don't think, "Wow all this for me," rather they think, "How many

trees did you cut down to mail this baby?"

**Make sure the purpose of your DM promotion is clear.** To inspire your DM promotion, peruse the following list of reasons for launching a DM campaign:

### A DM promotion can be launched to:

- announce a sale
- answer product inquiries
- build good will
- conduct research surveys
- distribute catalogs, newsletters, and other sales literature
- distribute information, news product samples
- follow up inquiries
- generate sales leads

*Don't use a \$20 word when you can use a \$1 word instead.*



- get customers to come to the store
- get more business from current customers
- invite prospects to attend seminars, conferences, hospitality suites, and trade show exhibits
- keep in touch with former customers
- motivate the sales force
- renew subscriptions, memberships, revise contracts, and insurance policies
- sell products by mail
- tie in with other media such as telemarketing, print advertising, and broadcast

*Your DM package should have a natural flow from outer envelope to letter, to flyer, to reply card.*

**Make sure you promotional package has a natural flow to it.** Your DM package should have a natural flow from outer envelope to letter, to flyer, to reply card. Your sales letter should be the first thing your reader sees when he or she opens your envelope.

**Modify your DM approach if targeting businesses.** The dramatic rise in business-to-business DM is due to the escalating cost of a personal sales call and the waste of time usually involved. However, the approach used for business-to-business DM, although similar to consumer DM, has some important distinctions that should be clarified. To help understand these differences follow the guidelines listed below:

- *Business direct mail must be to the point* – Most good direct mail, especially in the business-to-business field is not fancy. It is straightforward and to the point. It is also directed to the right audience. The fact is business owners have less time to read. This is why, in business DM, the short letter usually works best. In consumer DM, the opposite is true.

**NOTE** Effective business DM must be able to get across a message to the busy, scanning reader.

- *Don't count on impulse buying* – In business DM, the impulse buyer is less

*The four most important elements in direct mail marketing are the list, the offer, the format and the copy. Maximizing direct mail success depends first upon the lists you use, second upon the offers you make and third upon the copy and graphics you create.*

**SUPERTIP**

frequent. Companies have policies that any expenditure, no matter how small, must be approved by at least one other person. In business DM, unlike consumer DM, it is rare for customers to simply call you up and give you their credit card number.

- *Find out who makes the buying decisions* – In business DM, it is important to find out who actually makes the buying decisions and spends the money. This way you can target your benefit statements more specifically to meet their needs.

**NOTE** Purchasers for businesses are usually more interested in promotion, recogni-

tion, and reduced work than new products and services of other businesses.

- *Less is usually known about the mail order characteristics of the recipient in business mail* – Much of business mail is title addressed, so mail order purchasing characteristics often do not exist and cannot be evaluated as easily as consumer buying habits can.
- *Mail to more than one person when marketing high ticket items* – When you are marketing high-ticket items, you should mail to more than one person in a prospect organization. This includes:
  - person who needs the product
  - operating or line supervisor next level up
  - financial officer

- chief operating office
- research and development chief

The reasons for this are simple:

- the person who needs the item may be a poor communicator
- the true decision makers are often hidden
- a barrier of technical language can confuse the real decision makers unless they have someone able to explain to them what it all means (hopefully a junior operator who also received your DM package)
- *Use DM to create leads rather than sales* – In business-to-business correspondence, DM is used primarily for lead generation. This is because

business items are more complex and more expensive and often require salespeople from your company to follow up on a one-to-one basis to close a sale.

**Once you get inquiries, answer them right away.** When customers are “hot”

don't let them “cool” off. Respond to all inquiries by the end of the day. Remember that new business is what keeps things rolling.

*When customers are “hot” don't let them “cool” off.*

**Prospect with low cost mailers.**

Then, if you get a positive response, follow up with fancy mailers. However, when using this two-step marketing strategy, make sure that you follow up quickly. Old leads are cold leads.

**Separate your flyer and letter.** A separate letter with a separate flyer or circular will outpull a combination letter. As well, a package with a separate letter and brochure does better than a combination letter/brochure.

**Use an advertising key.** An advertising

key is usually a series of numbers included in a company address used to keep track of responses (see Guidebook #68). Since keeping track of your response rate in DM is critical to determining the success of a promotion, an advertising key is essential. In the case of a DM promotion, usually the BRC itself becomes the advertising key.

**NOTE** If orders are taken over the phone, make sure you ask the customer how they

came to know about your promotion to identify the appropriate ad key.

**Use a DM servicing company.** For assembly, addressing and mailing your project, you have the choice of doing it yourself or locating a mailing service company to do it for you. As the number of your DM pieces increase, the more practical it is for you to enlist outside assistance. DM service providers are also very good at getting you lower postal rates.

**Use return address labels.** Instead of sending BRCs or return envelopes, to lower the cost of each individual DM package, consider using peel-off labels: one with your customer's name and address, and another with your name and address. Although your response rate will

be lower, as this method looks less professional, that may be more than made up for by the increased savings. Remember, when you mailing thousands of letters, pennies add up.



*As the number of your DM pieces increase, the more practical it is for you to enlist outside assistance.*

# Newsletter

**Dateline** → **October 1996**  
Volume 3, Number 2

**Table of Contents** → **In this Issue**

- ♣ Training Your Cat to Purr on Command, p.4
- ♣ Breeding Champion Huskies, p. 3

**Logo** →

**Masthead** → ©Copyright 1996  
HPS Inc.  
2350 Grover Place  
Seattle, WA 99805  
(800) HPS-1000  
\$12/year

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## **HARRY'S PET SUPPLIES**

**Nameplate** → *N e w s l e t t e r*

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### **HPS Opens New Location in Hawaii**

Early September, HPS opened a new retail outlet in Maui, the land of sun and fun due to phenomenal demand for Harry's Vegetarian Puppy Chow in that area. The local pet lovers just can't seem to get enough of it. Here's what Jim Li, a resident of Maui for 15 years says, "Ever since I started feeding Rufus my pet Shepard HPS products, I can't believe how shiny his coat has become. I'm beginning to think if it's good enough for him, it's good enough for me . . . maybe I'll switch and become a vegetarian too."

Located three blocks from the beach and next to the famous Chin Ju's Fish & Steak house, Stella Griswald, vice president of HPS, feels their new location will double  
– continued on Page 2

**Visual** →

**Caption** → Jim Li, Satisfied HPS Customer

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### **Harry's Vegetarian Puppy Chow Wins Goldstop Award**

The 29th annual Goldstop Award, given to pet food manufacturers who introduce innovative products to the pet food industry

has recently been won by Harry and Stella Griswald, producers and distributors of Harry's Vegetarian Puppy Chow and founders of the HPS franchise. It has been only three years ago that HPS burst on to the pet food industry scene with its revolutionary food products and  
– continued on Page 3

**Jumpline** →

**New!** **HELP FOR YOUR  
GROWING  
HOMEBASED BUSINESS**



**Give your business a *BOOST* with this  
NEW BOOK from Barbara Brabec!**

**LEARN** from experts who already have been where you're going . . .  
**GET ANSWERS** to hundreds of bothersome questions . . .  
**DISCOVER** simple "tricks" to cut costs and increase profits . . .  
**IMPROVE** your marketing strategies and increase your customer base . . .  
**LEARN HOW** to better manage both time and money . . .  
**CONNECT** with other home-business owners across the country . . .  
**FIND** new information resources to help your business grow!

**Dear Reader:**

It's easy to **START** a business at home. The **TRICK** is in surviving the first few years. I know. I've been there. Maybe that's where you are now. Or maybe you're still trying to get up the necessary courage to just begin the business you've been dreaming about?

Either way, I know that each day brings new questions or problems that need to be addressed. If you are presently trying to expand an existing business, those questions and problems will only multiply as you probe new markets, consider growth options, and meet daily business challenges.

As you may know, my business is helping others succeed in small businesses based at home. Through my workshops, my books, and my quarterly periodical, I help individuals like you make business decisions, find new opportunities for growth, and get the answers needed to keep moving in a profitable direction.

I'm writing now to tell you about my newest book, *Help For Your Growing Homebased Business*. It may be just the boost your homebased business needs right now. See inside for details about how his companion guide to *Homemade Money* will benefit you. (If you're still trying to get your business off the ground and have not yet read *Homemade Money*, I urge you to do so now. You can preview this book in your local library, but do note that a new and enlarged edition was published this year. Some information in older editions is no longer accurate as a result.)

Whether you're just beginning in business, or trying to cope with the unique problems that come with time and growth, I'm sure you'll find one or more of my home-business publications just right for your present needs. In fact, I could be the best home-business friend you'll ever have. To take advantage of the special help I offer, just clip and mail the order form inside. Before long, I'll bet you'll be thanking me . . . all the way to the bank.

*Barbara*

**P.S.** More than A HUNDRED THOUSAND readers have already benefited from my home-business guides. I'd like YOU to benefit, too. You risk nothing by ordering now because I offer a **GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION!** Don't just dream about making money at home . . . use my proven success guides to turn your dreams into financial reality!

**FIGURE 6-1** First page of sales letter/brochure: the offer. (Courtesy Barbara Brabec Productions)



\$ 12.95 ppd.

## What's in it for you?

the following and see for yourself.

(Just a sampling of the many topics discussed)

**Chapter 6: MARKETING MAKES THE DIFFERENCE.**  Outline for a simple marketing plan. ;g. 76.  **Success Tips:** Why it's important to appear successful, even if you're not; the importance of "positioning" and information about "guerilla marketing." pg. 81  **Pricing tips** for home-business owners. Pg. 83.  **How to tap new markets**, including the Canadian market, pg. 85; museum shops, pg. 86; the "plush animal industry," pg. 82; and the Christian Gift Store market, pg. 100.  **A no-risk test marketing method.** pg. 89.  Mail order marketing secrets, pg. 90.  Working with sales representatives, pg. 97.  **Publicity Secrets – advice from pros!** How to figure out newsworthy press release books and angles that will result in local or national visibility, pg. 102

**Chapter 4: MONEYTALK:**  Learn about a mistake banks commonly make – one that could have your check bouncing from here to Kingdom Come! Pg. 41.  **Discover new ways to avoid bad checks or collect bounced checks.** pg. 42.  Should your business have charge card capabilities? More here than meets the eye. Pg. 44.  **How to get a loan when you have no collateral,** pg. 50.  How to create a simple cash flow report, pg. 51 . . **PLUS** financial planning and tax tips from experts.

**Chapter 5: AVOIDING LEGAL PITFALLS:**  The truth about the Better Business Bureau, pg. 59.  **Ways to cope with restrictive zoning laws.** pg. 62.  Advantages and disadvantages of incorporation. pg. 65.  **Partnership pitfalls,** pg. 66.  Legal guidelines concerning the manufacture and sale of products and services that utilize the name, voice, signature, photograph or likeness of deceased personalities.  Insight into the world of licensing. pg. 68.  **How to avoid lawsuits** by complying with consume product safety guidelines related to the manufacture of toys, children's articles

and clothing, pg. 69.  Why you may not need to file a formal trademark application and **the power of common-law trademarks,**" pg. 71.  Special tips on how to fight copyright infringement, plus insight into patents, pg. 72.

**Chapter 3: WORKING SMARTER:**  Learn a simple secret that could enable you to double your income overnight! Pg. 29.  **Ten steps to greater profits** every year, pg. 31.  Why the wrong business name can kill a business, and how to pick the right kind of name for YOUR business, pg. 32.  Insurance pitfalls home-business owners must avoid, pg. 35.  Character traits that spell **SUCCESS** in business, pg. 39.

**Chapter 1: HOME-BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE** – A report on conferences, trends and surveys that emphasize the importance of homebased businesses to the nation's economy. **PLUS the agony and ecstasy of self-employment – what it's really like to run a business at home.** Barbara's readers have shared their private thoughts on this topic, and you're sure to find yourself mirrored somewhere on these pages.

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**NOTE:** This is an intensely personal business book. All the information in it is based on someone's actual experience. **YOU GET SPECIFIC HOW-TO INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES, NOT THEORY.** Here you learn what has worked for many, what hasn't . . . and why. It's like sitting down with a group of special business friends to discuss the new problems that have arisen since your business began to roll.

*This is networking at its best . . . in printed form!*

**Barbara Brabec Productions P.O. Box  
2137 Naperville, IL 60566**