

# 10 Steps to Maximize Your Postcard Campaign

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Most proactive marketing campaigns have some form of direct mail incorporated into the overall strategy. Postcards, occasionally overlooked, are an effective marketing tool with good value and high impact:

- Typically they have lower postage costs when compared to first-class mail.
- For busy recipients, the postcard format is a compelling inducement to read the message. Not everyone has time (or wants) to open a sealed envelope for what seems like a “sales pitch.”
- They are an easy method for keeping your company's name in front of clients, customers, and prospective customers.
- There are uses for postcards other than sending them through the mail.

While somewhat simpler than creating a brochure, postcards are an extension of your company's voice and should be presented in the best possible way. Before starting your postcard campaign, here are ten aspects to consider:

**1. Size Matters.** While postcards can vary in size, a 4.5-x-5.25-inch postcard can be printed four to a page, which will lower the per-piece cost of materials. The largest piece that is considered a postcard measures 4.25-x-6 inches. Oversized and folded cards are usually considered first-class mail. The thickness of the card stock, areas reserved for post office use, and other specifications are part of the postcard's design. The US Postal Service has the most current mailing requirements listed on their web site ([www.USPS.com](http://www.USPS.com)). Your local post office's Business Division can also provide some free assistance.

**2. Return to Sender.** Half the time the address side of the postcard faces up. Use this to your advantage. Keep your business name visible by having your return address printed on the card. Include your company logo, telephone number, and even your web address. Returned mail will help you to maintain a clean database. This is important if the mailing is to a specific contact instead of "Occupant" or "Current Resident."

**3. Page Turner.** Print an eye-catching, attention-grabbing sentence or use an image on the address side to motivate the recipient to take an all-important action of turning the card over. There are some people who will simply flip the card into the trash instead of flipping it over to read. Use the available space on the address-side to create curiosity or prepare the reader's mindset to be conducive to your message. An open-ended question is a great way to spark interest.

**4. Shout It Out Loud.** Now that the reader is looking at the message side, the headline is the first impression. It's the “elevator pitch” for this mailing. The headline should convey a significant, albeit brief, idea that intrigues the recipient to continue reading the rest of your message.

**5. A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Dollars.** Way back in time, postcards were created for vacationers to mail pictures and "wish you were here" greetings to family and friends. An image instills an emotional response. Think about a picture of a steaming bowl of noodles or the sleek lines of the latest sports car: How many words would be needed to elicit the same reaction as the photo? The images will capture attention and the copy will provide the details with the call-to-action or redirected action.

**6. No Squinting.** The objective of your postcard should be to motivate the person reading it to call, visit, buy (call-to-action), or visit your web site (redirected action). The copy should have enough information to achieve this goal. Depending on your business, telling too much might not give the reader a reason to take action. Additionally, too many words means using a smaller font to fit into the limited amount of space, and many people are wary of "the small print." The wording of a postcard should follow the K.I.S.S. rule – Keep It Simple, Sweetheart!

**7. Data Intelligence.** Having a good mailing list is essential for optimizing responses. Your current clients should be the easiest list to maintain because a relationship already exists. A list with addresses without a specific contact (blind mailing) is easy to acquire and maintain. Mailing data with names matched to an address for personalized delivery is more valuable list and there are several ways to obtain data with this level of detail. One example is to purchase a list from a business service company, which would give you more demographic control with contact selection. This method of data acquisition might save (and earn) you more money.

**8. High Proof Content.** Before your postcard goes to the printer...Before your postcard goes into the printing process...Before your postcard goes out in the mail...Proof your postcard! Too many times mailed materials have missing information, typos, bad grammar, wrong image, or any number of errors. It is best to have several people review the material before it goes to the printer. Ask the printer for a sample copy prior to production, as well. There could be an issue with the colors or you might find a mistake that was overlooked the first time. If the finished piece still has an error, you may not want to mail it depending on the level of severity. The material is a representation of your company and your reputation, and some slip-ups are easier to live with than others.

**9. Materials, Mailing, and Money.** Printing, postage, and mailing preparation all have one thing in common: Cost. Printing services can be found locally, out of your area, and even online. Fulfillment houses, or mailing service companies, will prepare your postcards for the mail drop, which could reduce in-house labor costs. Typically the mailing service will allow you to use their bulk mailing license reducing your postage fee. Some print shops will also offer mailing service. Ask business associates who have done mailings about the vendors they have used.

**10. Make Tracks.** As with any marketing campaign, you will want to manage the cost, understand the results it generated, and know the cost per response or sale. As someone famous once said, "You can manage what you can track." Variations on the message and/or changing the offer should produce different rates of response. The images used on the postcard will have as much impact as the copy. Timing of the delivery can also be a factor as to how people respond. For example: A pizza postcard, arriving in the mail on Wednesday, might prompt a hard worker sorting through their mail to order pizza instead of having to cook.

Postcards have the potential to generate sales, start a relationship, and keep your company's name in front of your audience. Details and tactics for creating the best postcard will be unique to your business and industry. Even your company's persona will have an affect on the message. Use the list of aspects presented in this article as a starting point for researching a strategy best for your company.

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