

Starting A Co-Op Coupon Business From Your Home

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Starting A Co-Op Coupon Business From Your Home

Mail out coupons, circular and ads for up to 30 clients at a time on a cooperative basis. Contract to print (have printed or use provided) and mail out coupons to area residents and/or businesses on a cooperative, non-competing basis.

Although you mail offers from several clients at any one time in the same envelope, you guarantee that only non-competitive offers are contained in any one mailing.

For example, you would not include a 5 cent discount coupon for potatoes from store A, and another 7 cents from store B (store A would never do business with you again). But you could include a free oil change coupon from a service station with either.

Generally, it is best not to include two of the same type stores or merchants in the same mailing --even though the products themselves are not competitors, the merchants are.

Most businesses find it difficult and expensive to send out their own flyers (advertisements, coupons, etc.), much less work out the details of coupon discounts.

It requires know-how and is consuming to design a coupon program and even more so to set up a workable mailing program for one store.

Most merchants are not particularly talented or experienced in this department, which makes the job all the more difficult for them.

The cost of envelopes, manpower to stuff and address them, rent for the mailing list and postage can quickly add up to 50 cents or more for each piece mailed!

This is why so many local merchants use newspaper inserts, despite the fact that they are very expensive and not everyone sees their ads there -- it is cheaper and a lot less work than trying to do it themselves.

A person in the coupon business will soon become quite knowledgeable in this type of advertising, which means they can fulfill a definite need for the merchants in their community.

This business involves showing merchants in your area how you can print AND mail their coupons, flyers and ads to an

up-to-date, qualified local mailing list for 3 to 4 cents per item! Not only will you relieve them of the requirements to invest a good deal of their (non-expert) time and money, you will save them as much as 90% of the cost. If you were a merchant, wouldn't you listen?

You can help design coupons, offer standard models, or use the client's design -- the possible varieties are endless.

One plan would be to offer one or two color coupons for "Windy Bucks" (in Chicago) coupons for discounts and free introductory services such as 10% a permanent or a free soda with a meal, two dinners for the price of one, or a free car wash with a lubrication job.

This is where YOUR imagination needs to "catch fire" -- write down all sorts of ideas and have them ready to suggest when you need them.

For example, you could have the basic Windy Bucks printed with black ink on light green paper and then pay the printer a little extra to insert specific client information red ink (their name and offer) in red. You could use different colored paper for several different clients, or even offer an "exclusive" design or border (at an extra price, of course).

One "buck" could be printed with a five and become \$5 towards the purchase of \$50 at Jones Hardware; the next, worth a free shampoo at Sally's Salon and so forth.

You must promise to mail out a certain number of coupons to bona fide residents (and/or businesses) within a specified period of time (say, 30 days) and inform your clients that although there will probably be others in the same mailing, there will be NO COMPETING offers OR BUSINESSES (this is VERY important).

Your printing should be based on your costs, including printing, postage, paper and of course, your time.

Be sure to scale your offers so the larger the order, the cheaper the price, AND work out "specials" to offer -- combination orders of either different products and offers or future mailings.

For example, 1,000 Windy bucks with their info printed in red, mailed out might be \$45 per M; 3,000 - \$39; 5,000 - \$37, etc.

Then, a combination of 3 different offers might be offered at the 3,000 price -- or a contract for 1,000 per month for

five months might be offered at the 5,000 price. These are just a few examples of many possible ways to offer discounts that encourage larger orders -- which is your objective because you not only make more profit; you get better rates on larger orders too.

One thing you might need is a good mailing list, which is a viable alternative to the "occupant" approach. You can rent or purchase one or start accumulating your own.

If you live in a rural or small town area, you can build a pretty good mailing list from the phone book (use the prefixes to help determine the zip code).

If you have a computer, you can get a program with ZIP codes -- or you can look them up in the post office directory (assuming you don't want to buy one).

Some merchants will have their own mailing lists -- and may allow you to use them. If so, you could combine theirs with yours to eventually build a pretty good list. of course, you can also purchase club and organizational listings, voter registration lists and keep all addresses of anyone answering mailed out offers.

A fairly important decision might be necessary in a promotion like the Windy Bucks example -- you will need to determine if you want to emphasize your company and idea or simply promote whatever the clients desire.

Of course, the client's wishes always come first and you may not have a good promotion idea (yet). If you do, you will be able to offer some pretty good prices as well as a chance for merchants to "get on the bandwagon" -- join in a program that is working. Otherwise, you (and your company name) stay behind the scenes as an advertising agent that helps design, print and disseminate your client's materials for their promotion.

In either case, the longer you are at it and the more qualified will you become -- and the more merchants will want to take advantage of your experience and services. As the saying goes: "the harder you work, the luckier you will get."

Before signing up any clients, work out arrangements with a printer (unless you can do your own). Find out all the "shortcuts" price breaks and cost of different paper, ink, color combinations, as well as what sizes the printer can accommodate and what type of cuts or logos are available (at what price).

Normally, standard cuts (borders, pointing fingers) are provided at little or no charge and custom cuts are so much

per square inch.

Note that you can usually save money by having more than one made at a time. Standard coupons should be in the 3 x 8 inch range, but always sized so that you can get as many as possible on a single sheet of standard or legal sized paper (to save \$\$).

Your cost for printing good quality single color coupons should be in the 2 to 5 cents per page range (depending on quantity, how many prices you check and how well you bargain).

Using colored paper and inks can increase the effect without much extra cost (in comparison to two colors of ink or color printing).

Mailing list addresses run about a half cent each; envelopes one to 7 cents each, postage 10-13 cents, and your bulk mailing permit about \$50 over year after the initial permit.

Printing costs can be lowered by designing and keeping general formats and merely substituting internal copy for clients.

One color ink is cheaper than two; black and white is much cheaper than color, colored paper and/or various ink colors are cheaper and almost as effective as two color printing (which requires two "runs" through the press).

Some local printers are quite expensive, while others will want your business enough to "deal" (The more business you can bring them, the more "clout" you will have).

If you have or can hire a desktop publishing system, you can prepare "camera ready" masters that can be reproduced inexpensively by a photo offset printer (small runs can be +handled by copy services).

Note that some of your clients will provide their own material (from their home offices) -- either to copy or ready to mail. You may also be able to save by compiling your own mailing lists (see B235).

Finally, you should offer "exclusive" mailings, where you mail out client's material -- for a significantly price of course. It may be worth it to a client because you have the know-how, production facilities and the bulk rate permit.

They certainly don't want to believe their product is not good! Your advice should always be honest in the sense that you first advise them on how to be effective; second, how to save money, and third, according to your profit margin.

You also should be extremely careful not to get in between rival clients or appear to be favoring one over the other.

Never discuss one client with another (if you talk about one, you will talk about all of them). Just "steer" them away from advertising or layouts that would appear to compete directly through your services.

Finally, be especially wary of "distress orders." Many businesses, when they are on the brink of disaster will try to bolster their position through heavy advertising. trouble is that if it doesn't work, the advertising is added to their list of unpaid bills. Don't be their "last resort."

BUSINESS SOURCES

BIG CITY LITHOGRAPH, 550 N. Claremont Blvd., Claremont, CA 91711. Photo offset printer.

THE PRINTING FACTORY, Box 27, Nesconset, NY 11767. Printers of mail order materials.

GRAPHICS ARTS TECHNICAL, 4615 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15214. Printing supplies for the home printer.

TURNBAUGH PRINT SUPPLY, 104 S. Sporting Hill Rd., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055. 717/737/5637. sells new and used printing presses and supplies.

EMPRINT, 329 Gunkel, Dayton, OH 45410, 513/2523-1452. Small used offset printing presses.

DOT PASTEUP SUPPLY CO., Box 369, Omaha, NE 68101. Free catalog of paste-up supplies for making newsletters, advertisements, flyers, etc.

DUPLIPRINTERS, INC., 222/226 Broadway, Newburgh, NY 12550. sells kits for in-home printing; sales and dealerships. Starter kit - \$72.

COUP-PAK, 585 Stewart Ave., Garden City, NY 11530. Information on an advertising coupon business without investment.

DOVER PUBLICATIONS, INC., 31 East 2nd St., Mineola, NY 11051. Discount books, clip art, stencils, etc.

QUILL CORPORATION, 100 Schelter Rd., Lincolnshire, IL 60917-4700, 312/634-4800. Office supplies.

SWEDCO, Box 29, Mooresville, NC 28115. 3 line rubber

stamps - \$3; business cards - \$13 per thousand.

ZPS, Box 581, Libertyville, IL 60048-2556. Business cards (raised print - \$11.50 per K) and letterhead stationery. Will print your copy ready logo or design, even whole card.

WALTER DRAKE, 4119 Drake Bldg., Colorado Springs, CO 80940. Short run business cards (250 - \$3), stationery, etc. Good quality, but no choice of style or color.