

136 Basic Steps To Mail Order Success

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136 Basic Steps To Mail Order Success

This "mini" course outlines the essential elements for establishing and operating a successful mail order business. Here is a practical guide for beginners and check list for those already in mail order.

THE COMPANY NAME:

1. Select a short, friendly, informal, easy-to-remember company name.
2. Your personal name is acceptable, but add "Co.", "Gifts", etc.
3. Home address or post office box makes no appreciable difference.

STARTING SUPPLIES:

4. Neatly printed letterheads and envelopes
5. A typewriter - or the availability of one is a must
6. Parcel post shipping labels
7. Avoid purchasing expensive office equipment or supplies until absolutely needed for more efficient operation - and capital permits

STARTING CAPITAL

8. To purchase above starting supplies
9. To pay for two or three publication ads to test your offer
10. Or, to pay rental for a minimum of 1,000 names for a direct mail program, plus postage costs
11. To pay for preparation and layout of a display ad
12. To pay for art work and typesetting of circular
13. To pay for additional or continuing promotions if initial results are encouraging.
14. Costs to cover promotion expenses if further testing is required

15. Extra capital to allow for unforeseen and unexpected expenses

THE PRODUCT: (Select a product that, preferably):

16. Is new, unusual and, if possible, exclusively yours

17. Is of good quality and fairly priced

18. Fills a definite need for a wide and ready market

19. Offers strong appeal to the prospect

20. Is not commonly sold in retail stores

21. Cannot be bought elsewhere or only from limited sources

22. You can control its production or distribution

23. Is not expensive to make or produce; can be bought at low price

24. Interests a large percentage of the market

25. Is not seasonal (except Christmas); can be sold the year around

26. Lightweight; not fragile; safe and inexpensive to ship

27. Will be used up or consumed and must be reordered periodically

LOCATING A SUITABLE MAIL ORDER ITEM:

28. Look through mail order sections of magazines to check what types of products successful mail order dealers offer

29. Inquire of local manufacturers and Chamber of Commerce

30. Attend trade shows (with gift, jewelry, household themes, etc.

31. Contact appropriate manufacturers listed in Thomas Register, available at Public Libraries

32. Watch for new product listings in trade journals and magazines

33. Check out close-outs, surplus and overstock offers

34. Contact mail order supply sources

35. Design, develop, manufacture or publish your own product

THE LINE:

36. Develop or acquire other items to tie in with your main product

37. Present follow-up offers to customers and prospects

38. Promote succession of products appealing to the same trade

39. Sell such services as personalization, consultation, etc., if such services are adaptable to your line

THE ADVERTISING COPY:

40. Use attention-getting, bold headline copy in ads

41. Illustrate the product if space permits; explain how it is used

42. Write copy in brief, bouncy, down-to-earth style

43. Avoid any overly-clever, tricky phrases or expressions

44. Be sincere; don't exaggerate

45. Describe the product clearly and fully

46. Stress the "YOU" approach; tell how the offer will benefit him

47. Avoid overtalking about yourself or your company

48. Strive for conviction and sincerity - be believable

49. Instill confidence; make the prospect feel you are honest

50. Stir him into action to order your product

51. Give specific directions for ordering

52. Provide a guarantee of satisfaction or money back

53. Tailor the ad/literature to fit the prospect you want to reach

TESTING YOUR OFFER:

54. If capital permits, test more than one magazine

55. Test more than one ad, each in a different publication
56. Try split runs if the magazine offers regional or sectional issues
57. Continue a successful ad without change until its pull drops to break-even point
58. Don't rush to change an ad that is pulling well; experiment slowly
59. Test only one change at a time: size of ad - copy - different appeal - new headline - another illustration - new price
60. Use short testimonials if space permits
61. Offer a bonus - something free or at reduced price
62. Key each ad or mailing to determine where results were derived
63. Keep accurate records of returns from each promotion

SALES LITERATURE:

64. Usually consists of sales letter, descriptive circular or folder, order form, return envelope (Some offers may be effectively sold by only a sales letter)
65. Effective sales letter must create AIDA - Attention, Interest, Desire, Action
66. The circular should fully illustrate or describe the product. It must provide more detailed information about the product - its uses, benefits, advantages and other special appeals
67. Return envelope is an essential part of sales literature to make it convenient for the customer to mail the order
68. Mailing sales offers by first-class mail vs third-class mail usually shows no appreciable difference in results
69. Mailing envelope can feature an attractive design or teaser message to induce the recipient to open and read the offer

THE PRODUCT SUPPLIER:

70. Develop or produce your own mail order item, if possible
71. Try to arrange exclusive mail-order rights with the supplier

72. Establish supply sources close to home to save delivery time and shipping costs
73. Seek lowest price if item is offered by two or more suppliers
74. Order larger quantities, if you can afford such purchases, to get lower prices or greater discounts
75. Ensure the supplier is reliable and will provide the merchandise you plan to promote; that he will ship orders promptly
76. Consider only products which allow an adequate profit margin (at least a 3 to 1 profit mark-up on lower-priced items)
77. Consider a supplier who is willing to "drop-ship" your orders directly to your customers - seek at least a 50% discount

THE SELLING PRICE:

78. Price merchandise fairly; give customers their money's worth
79. Include postage or shipping costs in selling price
80. Use round numbers (\$3.00, \$5.00, etc.) for lower-priced items to make it convenient for customers to remit payment
81. Allow for all costs in marking up prices - postage, overhead, packing, allowances for non-deliveries, refunds, bad checks
82. Be certain to allow yourself an adequate mark-up to assure profit
83. Test different prices to determine which selling price brings in the greatest amount of profit

ADVERTISING:

84. Don't attempt to start unless you can afford at least two or three ads; or pay for a direct mailing to at least 1,000 names
85. Plan to advertise consistently
86. Use ad space relative to sale price, i.e., use small-size ads for low-priced items and larger ads for more expensive items
87. Items priced over \$3.00 usually do not sell as profitably

through classified ads

88. In space ads, offer products in the \$3.00 to \$10.00 price range

89. It is usually better to advertise for inquiries if an item sells for \$10.00 or more

90. Two small ads will generally produce more business than one ad twice as large

91. Keep repeating ads as long as they continue to be profitable

92. Don't waste unnecessary space; advertising is expensive

93. Don't expect to make a killing from one ad or mailing. consistent advertising is the key to mail order success

THE MEDIA:

94. Newspapers with mail order sections bring quick returns and are acceptable for initial test. Results are not usually as good as from magazine ads for long-range pull

95. Use only publications with the type of readership who will react favorably to your type of product or offer

96. Unsold inquirers should be followed up with special inducements or with new offers

97. Rent names only from reliable brokers or mail order sources

98. Use only lists of people who are logical prospects for your offer

99. Compile a mailing list from your own inquirers and customers

100. Offer your names to list brokers; this is a good source for extra income

101. Advertise in publications which feature large mail order sections; place ads in the same issues or sections that your competitors advertise

THE ADVERTISING AGENCY

102. Select an advertising agency experienced in mail order

103. Check their credentials; current accounts; successful promotions

104. Don't use agencies which represent direct competitors

105. Expect to pay in advance for ad placements and other services until credit terms are established

106. Advertising agencies are not infallible. Forgive an honest mistake. Give the agency at least a second chance

107. Expect to pay for preparation of display ads, copy layout, and other services you authorize. Classified ad copy will be prepared without any cost to you

108. Extend full cooperation; go along with their recommendations

109. If your advertising budget is substantial, consider setting up your own advertising agency - thereby saving 15% commission, plus a 2% discount in many instances

SHIPMENTS:

110. Fill and ship orders promptly. Mail order buyers get edgy with delays

111. Use plain but sturdy packing to ship orders

112. Ship via parcel post or U.P.S., whichever is cheaper

113. Use neatly printed shipping labels

114. Address labels with typewriter; not by hand unless indelible ink is used and address printed.

115. Specify "Return Guaranteed" on labels or package

TERMS OF PAYMENT:

116. Accept personal checks; very few bounce

117. Avoid C.O.D.'s unless you receive sufficient down package to assure you have collected enough to cover the costs of the return, plus costs of handling and repacking the merchandise

118. Don't offer to sell on credit or time payments unless item is high-priced and you can afford to carry credit accounts

THE CUSTOMER:

119. Consider the customer your greatest asset. Acknowledge that he is always right; even when he isn't

120. Handle complaints promptly; write courteous explanation

121. Offer replacement if product is broken or damaged
122. Issue immediate refunds; adjust overpayments promptly
123. Promote new or other products to your customer list. No other class of prospect will be as responsive
124. Work your customer list until it no longer proves profitable

YOU:

125. You, mainly, control the destiny of your mail order business
126. Be energetic; devote as much time as you can spare to advance your enterprise to a more profitable future
127. Be determined to make your mail order business a huge success
128. Learn as much as you can about mail order techniques
129. Be original; exclusive
130. Don't copy anyone; copy only successful methods and techniques; always strive to improve on them
131. Keep searching diligently for new, "exclusive" products
132. Don't become disappointed by a slow start, or discouraged by a failure or two along the way
133. Always perform professionally; an amateur does not get paid for his services
134. Build your own financial pyramid; reinvest profits into productive programs that may mushroom your profits steadily
135. Avoid being an easy mark for "get-rich-quick" schemes; start and operate your business on sound principles
136. Refer to this handy checklist periodically - remind yourself to follow only accepted guidelines that control the safe operation of a mail order business.

BEST OF SUCCESS!